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**A YOUNG ARAB COUPLE**

*Photograph by Lehnert & Landsack Tunis*

# The Land of Veiled Women : Some Wanderings in Algeria, Tunisia & Morocco

BY  
JOHN FOSTER FRASER

*With Four Illustrations*

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# THE LAND OF VEILED WOMEN

## CHAPTER I

### BOU-SAADA : THE PLACE OF HAPPINESS

FOR days I crossed a land of drifting sand and scorching sun, and now I have reached the oasis, where water gurgles and palm-trees grow and the Arab town of Bou-Saada rests by a river.

Bou-Saada means the Place of Happiness—and happy it is to the travel-racked man to let aching eyes fall on the green of the gardens.

It is a mother-earth town of the drab tint of sun-baked bricks, the houses square-faced but bulging, and scarcely a window in the place. The thin, shadow-soaked streets are drunken. A bit of the town the French officials and traders have taken to themselves and made liveable. The native town is, in design and appearance, much what a child of four would make if given a barrow-load of mud !

But the light—the light—the beautiful light ! The blue Italian sky is leaden to this sky. A few artists know of Bou-Saada, and come for the light. I have seen a painter struggle for an hour to get a blue approaching the blue of the heaven hereabouts. He failed. I have seen a man trying to get the shimmer of the sands, and, good artist though he be, the



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picture was a daub when the real thing lay before one. It is a light that burns out all detail in a landscape. It produces grand splashes of colour. It makes a mud-wall picturesque.

Yes, the light! No cloud, no misty film drawn from dew, puts a veil before the eyes. The red ochreish desert and the red heave of low barren hills make the world a place of light and blazing silence. The sun burns with the scorch of a furnace.

The glare has something strange in it. It is a splash of light, but moving, undulating. As you walk you are conscious of the heat-wave rising and swelling and falling and rising like a sea in calm. It is a glare which eats up all detail. There are innumerable tufts of dull sage brush on the desert, and you see them distinctly, and yet the gaze feels only the limitless, featureless expanse. The Arab town is a jumble of rickety houses, but you know only of the brown symmetry of the mass. There are splotchy, whitened walls—and only the aching white is seen. The gardens, the palm trees, the dark cypress, the fig-trees are blends of green—yet you only see they are cool shades in the landscape. The colours of the market-place, the fruit-stalls, the piles of gaudy cotton stuffs, the women veiled and shrouded in white, the swarthy black-whiskered Arabs in flowing robes of white—many tones, but in this wealth of effulgent light, all sharp, distinct, radiant with the glamour of the Orient.

Here we are on the edge of the Saharan desert. Long-lined camel caravans come up from the south. The features of most men are almost European; but there are others with the black face, squat noses and

thick lips of regions near the Equator. The women of the town look short, so swathed are they. Their white trousers are bundles of crumpled pleats, and they walk with a side-swing of the hips which is sensuous. A simple white shawl hangs from the head to the shoulders. The veil, or *haik*, is not fastened. It is clasped between the fingers and thumb of each hand and, stretched, is held up before the face—a way which I have not seen elsewhere.

But in this town of nearly 7,000 persons there are others besides Mohammedans. There are 600 Jews. The Jewish women are unveiled. And one marks that the African Jew has lost the facial characteristics of others who came out of Judea. Their features are more refined. The Jews dress much like the town Arab: baggy breeches, coloured zouave jacket and turban. Their women-folk are given to lavish finery.

The Jews are the chief merchants. Also, they are the makers of gold ornaments for all the Moslem women of the desert. A woman's worldly possessions are her gold decorations. We will seek rest in a goldsmith's shop, and there sip Arab tea sweetened and flavoured with mint. It is not much of a shop, a sort of whitewashed cupboard. The artificer crouches on the ground. He has a tiny furnace and a tiny anvil, and tiny tools lie about. Near by is a heavily padlocked box where he keeps his gold. Decorations are made to order. None are manufactured for possible prospective buyers who may be looking round for a present. Once a Moslem woman becomes possessed of jewellery she never parts with it, except in a case of extreme want. No Moslem

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ever wears imitation jewellery ; it is always pure gold. The Bou-Saada women have a peculiar brooch. It is a large disc of gold with a finger-sized hole in the centre and all round are tiny buttons of gold, with a slender curving thread of gold running between. The design becomes conventional, and though there is variety in size and shape, there is no departure from the set pattern. Necklets are generally looped gold coins. Sometimes they form miniature breast-plates ; dozens of gold coins are fastened together with clasps, and as they are of all European countries, and all periods, the women are often a kind of hobbling numismatic museum. Ear-rings are thick gold hoops, as large as your hand, and are weighted with gold beads. They are worn, not through the lobe of the ear, but rest upon the top of the ear. Bangles are many, and of gold. If there is a silver ornament it is a heavy anklet.

These things you do not see in the streets, but only in the houses. The Mohammedan hides his women-folk from strange male eyes. He does not trust his brother man. But there is less of this shielding in the case of Europeans than in the case of Moslems, for it is known that we are used to meeting women other than our relatives. One day a Mohammedan came into my little hotel with his wife. She was closely veiled—nothing of her face could be seen, but a pair of large, lustrous, brown eyes, with pigment accentuating the moon arches of the eyebrows and pencilled kohl on the rims of the eyes. Kohl has the effect of increasing the beauty of the eye. But it has a real use : the eye is not so much affected by the glowing sunshine. When the

Arab and I got into conversation, the wife loosened her veil and threw it over her shoulder and revealed a sweet face. She played with her little boy. Presently another Arab entered the room, and at once she re-affixed her veil. For a young woman to show her face in public is the height of impropriety in the mind of a Mohammedan; but it is known that the European has no such idea.

It was through a French artist friend that I first became acquainted with the ladies of an Arab household—a widow, whose husband had visited Europe, and her two daughters. A heavy door, a dark passage and a sort of courtyard open to the sky, and then a broad balcony divided by partitions—sleeping places. The walls were mud-brown, and there was no furniture or decoration except carpets. The fireplace was of the most primitive kind, but the burning of juniper-wood filled the air with strong aromatic odour. The lady, inclined to be stout, was in black; she wore a crimson turban, and from beneath this bulged a mass of glossy black hair. Throat, ears, arms, fingers were heavy with gold jewellery. Between the eyes was a tattooed cross, and on each cheek was a cross tattooed. Most Arab women in the south of Algeria have these marks, and there are folk who tell you that, though its meaning has now gone, it was the sign whereby, in former days, when Christianity swept like a wave over Northern Africa, the native Christians proclaimed their faith.

The daughters, two modest slips of big-eyed girls, wore caps of red. Their loose-fitting clothes of apple-green suggested they had been copied from a Kate

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Greenaway picture. They were delicate, pale, and pretty girls, and the mother said the elder, aged thirteen, was about to be veiled, and would be married in a few months. To be veiled means passing from girlhood to womanhood, and then the French artist could no longer introduce her into his pictures of Arab life, for the future husband, twice her age, would not think it proper. Ordinarily, the Mohammedan man never looks upon the face of his wife till the bridal night. But when the marriage takes place soon after a girl has been veiled, it is not at all unlikely he may not only have seen her, but have spoken to her. It may be because of her beauty as a child that he wants to marry her. It is the girl who has no choice, if her parents agree.

Our hostess clapped her hands and negress servants appeared from the gloom and produced the burnished pot in which coffee was boiled, and the girls brought us the cups—silver, and no larger than egg-cups—and held them out with both hands. We lounged on the thick Bou-Saada rugs, sipped our coffee, puffed cigarettes, and asked the girls if they would like to live in Europe? They said they would be afraid, because there were no Arabs there.

The Arab girls of high rank are veiled at six years of age. Besides the cross, each tribe has its distinguishing tattoo mark, generally on the forehead, and thus people of the same tribe may easily recognise each other. South, at Laghouat, the women wear a costume that is picturesque though ragged. It is a kind of ancient *peplum*, open at the sides and fastened on the shoulders by huge silver hooks. On the head is something like a gold tiara, and from just below the eyes

falls a long veil. In many places the women cannot be said to wear clothes—in the ordinary sense. They cannot use the needle, and their robe or *melhafa* is a piece of stuff like a big blanket, and this they cleverly, rather than gracefully, wrap themselves in. The one fastening is a long-pinned, triangular brooch of silver set with coloured stones, usually turquoise.

The women of the Sahara are all good-looking, and every one carries a little mirror, which she consults whenever she applies the kohl to eyes and eyebrows.

In North Algeria it is often cold in winter—there is even snow. Many of the natives wear the same clothing summer and winter. Sometimes it is thin cotton, sometimes it is silk, and sometimes soft-textured wool. The number of yards used would startle a Court milliner. The head and body covering is frequently of material six yards long by two yards wide. The pantaloons, baggy and bunched, are sometimes made with eighteen yards of stuff.

With only the eyes visible—dreamy, beautiful brown eyes—there is always an air of delightful mystery about an Arab woman. Who is she, and is the rest of her face in harmony with those love-deep eyes? Is she young, or is she old? You cannot tell. Behind the veil is the charm of the unknown. If you drop from the realm of poetry to the matter-of-fact, you may take it that the veiled woman with enormous pantaloons is young. With growing age comes the habit of wearing a less voluminous garment, and it gets less voluminous the older the woman gets. Nearly always the costume of the street is white—nothing but white. If any other colour is worn—black, dark blue, yellow or brown—

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the whole garb is of one colour, with not even a variation in shade.

Life goes very easily in Bou-Saada. Games and gossip—these occupy most of the time of the women folk. The poorer people weave carpets. Those who are better off do not read because they cannot, and there is little skill with the needle. Scandals and stories, which would shock the ears of a more cultured people, occupy much of the day. And, like all ignorant people, they are superstitious and ready to accept anything of marvel that is brought to them.

Do you know of the *achat-el-fal*—the meal of fate ? On a Thursday one of the young women of the family puts rouge and kohl on her left cheek. With her left hand she makes a large dish of *kous-kous*, a mealy dish which is nutritious and strangely fattening to those who take no exercise. A girl, on reaching the marriageable age is stuffed with *kous-kous*, and balls of flour, and honey and butter flavoured with aniseed, and the fatter she is the more pleased her future husband will be with her. The woman with the decorated left cheek, carrying her veil eye-high, proceeds through the city to seven baths, seven mills, and seven streams, and in a whisper invites the *djinns* to supper.

Midnight : the harem lit only with a few blackened lamps : the women of the household sitting round waiting their ghostly guests.

The lights are extinguished. All is silence. The young woman moves stealthily to the door and opens it. The invisible spirits are supposed to enter. Another long silence. Then the lamps are lit and the women climb into the night on the roof-top. Fires are prepared. Each woman takes a piece of *kous-kous* dough and

fashions it roughly to represent herself. She throws it into the flame, and from the way the model behaves in the fire she is able to imagine what her destiny will be.

Kept in seclusion, languorous and without exercise, it is natural that the thought and life of an Arab woman should be sensuous. Flat roof adjoins flat roof, and it is possible to journey over half Bou-Saada by the roofs. An unforgivable offence is for a man to look from his own roof upon the roof of his neighbour, for here the ladies gather and sit unveiled. But human nature is the same in Bou-Saada as elsewhere, and sometimes glances are exchanged. The very difficulty of an intrigue makes it all the more a ravishing pastime with the passionate Arab, and the woman, trained from her earliest girlhood on lascivious stories and amorous poetry, runs risks. Now, when a husband returns home and notices a pair of red slippers before the door of his wife's room, he knows that a lady visitor is within and he must not enter. Therefore, the placing of red slippers at the door is one of the devices adopted by women who would deceive their spouses. Indeed, you hear stories of lovers visiting their ladies dressed as women, so easy is the disguise if the man is not too tall and adopts the waddling walk of the Arab woman. Should the husband suspect—especially if the visitor departs by the house-top, which is not unusual—he watches, or sets a spy to work. Then some night an Arab is mysteriously murdered in one of the dark alleys.

The light blinds and the eyes ache. Yet let us idle an hour in the market-place. Sheep are being driven in, skinny, lop-eared sheep, and in every flock are goats, for their presence is supposed to keep the sheep



healthy. The sheep are herded and feet are tied together to prevent a scamper. Buyers are about, and bargaining is conducted in high-pitched voices. An Arab seizes a sheep, lifts it in his arms and conjectures its weight. The seller asks a sum. The prospective buyer laughs at him and offers much less. The seller waves him away. But they begin shrieking at one another; the seller lowers his price, the buyer increases his. The seller says the sheep is the heaviest in his flock. The buyer retorts it is nothing but a bag of bones. After much haggling, the deal is made. The butcher hurries the sheep away and cuts its throat. Whilst the animal is panting to death, a knife cuts a small hole at the lower end of one of the legs. The butcher puts his mouth to the aperture and blows hard. Another man beats the skin with a stick; so it is easily loosened and the skin is removed.

Millions of flies buzz round a butcher's shop. Often they are so thick that you cannot see the mutton for flies. The Arab does not mind. When the mutton is chopped up, hundreds of flies go to their death.

Under some trees is a crowd. A wandering storyteller has a considerable audience. He is a large man, very dark, and is wearing a blue burnous and a white turban. He is seated on one side of a circle of listeners, also seated, whilst standing around are a couple of hundred listeners. It is a drowsy afternoon, and the story-teller's voice can be easily heard. He turns his head, addressing different sections of his audience, and the only dramatic gesture is a movement of the hands. Attention is rapt. Now and then a little rattle of laughter runs round, and those who are pleased throw

coins into the circle. The story-teller takes no notice, but a lad in his employ quickly picks up each offering.

I would visit the Oued—the little river which is the mother of Bou-Saada. Beautiful is water in a parched, verdureless land. Happy is running water to the sight of blistered eyes. Is there any music in the world so sweet to the ears of the man from the desert as the prattle of a rivulet? It is the river which gives nutriment to the palm-trees, causes luxuriant foliage and provides shade. There is no shade in the desert, and to sit in the shadow of a palm, after a long journey over the hot sands, is like resting within the portals of Paradise.

A tall Arab directs me the shortest way to the river. He does not point, for Arabs never point; he turns his head to a drooping lane, sends his gaze down it, and then raises his chin as much as to observe, "That way."

It is the hull of the afternoon, and a luscious balm is in the air. Before the cafés Arab idlers are playing dominoes. In the shadow of an arch reclines an Arab on a rush mat. He is old and yellow-skinned. His robes are scrupulously clean, and he is wearing smoked glasses. It is the latter oddity which induces me to inquire who he is. A *marabout*—a holy man. He is wealthy, and lives a day's journey away. Occasionally he comes into Bou-Saada, so that good Mohammedans may give him money. It is merit to have the privilege to give him money.

A long-shanked and sparsely clad man goes by with a swollen goat-skin slung behind him. He is rattling two brass cups and cries his wares. He has sweet, cool water to sell. The thick, dusty road seems to breathe

back the heat of the sun chokingly. Here is a group of cameleers, broad, muscular and hairy men. Beneath their white burnouses are stout brown legs, and their feet are in loose-fitting shoes. They walk flat-footed, telling they are much accustomed to trudging over soft earth. Their dark faces have been made darker still by the sun, and their beards are short and black and silky. Round the cowl of white which covers head, brow and neck are twisted many cords of camel-hair twine. Western people cover themselves to keep out the cold; the Oriental covers himself to resist the heat. On a white-hot, gasping day I have known Arabs twist thick woollen burnouses over head and shoulders.

Some aristocratic Arabs—you tell that by the quality of their raiment, the richness of their jackets, the gold buttons and the gold lace upon their sleeves—are wearing French shoes and socks. Kuids, or chiefs of villages, they have been to the Bureau Arabe, the administrative office from which the French rule the natives. One man, carrying himself nobly, the eye clear but almond-shaped, the nose semitic, the mouth full and voluptuous, has a French Order upon his burnous. The French conciliate the Arab chiefs with cheap decorations—and the Arab chiefs are very proud. An Arab on a haughty stallion goes scampering by. The man is wearing a blue burnous; he is in French employ.

Tramp, tramp, tramp! In a cloud of dust a body of French soldiers come marching along. Bronze, lithe men in peaked caps. Their shirts are white, and round their waists are wrapped long sashes of indigo wool, a necessary precaution against climatic ailments. They

are wearing brown holland trousers, clasped at the bottom with short leggings. They are the representatives of France. Yonder, on a high knuckle of rock, is the fortress, straight-walled, stout gated, buttressed, with long slits in the walls, from which the nozzles of guns would peep if there were an Arab uprising and the French obliged to seek shelter.

Down and up are curvetting mud lanes with mud walls on either side. Gay children are at play. Bundles of white—women—come along, and then stand with faces to the wall whilst the unbeliever passes. But beyond open doorways, and in the gloom, unveiled women can be seen throwing the shuttle in the slow construction of an Arab carpet, or in the weaving of a *haik*.

The wide, winding river is a jumble of boulders. Zig-zag comes the stream, flowing hurriedly where narrowed, and, where the land indents, making a broad and sluggish pool. Where the water runs quick women are kneeling and washing clothes.

Above the banks are high walls, and beyond the walls is riotous vegetation—crowded, dank, yielding the odour of dampness. Oleanders and pomegranates throng together. With almost sylph-like slenderness the palm-trees rise, and the fronds of their bushy heads fling deep shade. There is the slumbrous hush of hot afternoon in the air.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DANCING GIRLS OF THE OULED NAÏL

THERE is the plaintive wail of the Arab flute and the rhythmic throb of the drum. It is night. Still the crescent moon is below the rim of the desert. It is a velvety, peachy darkness. The stars glitter through a sky that is purple over deep blue. And the air from the Little Sahara comes to the cheek like the breath of a woman who is fond.

Now the blind of the day is drawn and the still night of Africa hangs over the desert. The lilt of the music lifts and falls. White-robed Arabs flit by like ghosts in a city of the dead.

A French artist, living in an Arab house, has arranged a delight of the Orient—a dance. The dancers are girls belonging to the Ouled Naïl tribe, who live on the Sahara, far south. It is a poor, bleached region, but the young women are good to look upon. So, through a length of generations, these girls of the Ouled Naïl come to oases like Bou-Saada and Biskra, which are meeting-places of caravans that trail in after many days' journey, and they dance and sing and please the Arabs, and become rich, and go back to their tribe and marry, and the rest is lost in the haze and mystery of the Sahara.

The tribes of the Ouled Naïl are *maraboutique*, descended from a saint. All the girls traffic their

## DANCING GIRLS OF THE OULED NAIL 15

charms in the towns bordering the desert. The free love by which they earn money is not considered any dishonour; being *marabout*, they are respected by other tribes. Among the Arabs, where the men easily outnumber the women and polygamy only makes the disproportion greater, the occupation of the girls of the Ouled Nail has become a religious rite in the eyes of Mohammedans. The men are effeminate, and the girls are sent at an early age to the towns to follow the tribal profession.

They are tall and willowy, have a pink glow in their brown cheeks, are full of laughter and light-heartedness. Their eyes sparkle and their teeth gleam. When dancing, their supple hips yield to the ecstasy of poetic motion. The Arabs love the dance of the Ouled Nail. Money is thrown to them. Perfumes are poured upon their fingers.

The dance is on the roof, white-plastered, and the thick mud parapet is white also. Through the balm of the air other Arab houses silhouette against the stars. The *kouba*, or dome of a mosque, stands like a sentinel.

The French artist, with the instinct of his race, has provided an Eastern setting. A carpet is stretched, and here squat the Ouled Nails, amazingly arrayed. In the half light of filmy lanterns they look like strange creatures who have come from another world.

Two Arabs lean against the wall, their dress indistinguishable from the wall, but their dun faces clearly marked; they are playing the flute and drum. The tune is sad; it is a drone. It seems like melancholy drawn out of the night and distilled in the pathos of liquid poetry. All Oriental music is in this minor,

uncanny key, as though the air had once been sprightly and happy, but is now mournful and yearning for the buried past.

A girl is dancing slowly and with long curves—like a skater making turns on the ice. Her features are dead and her body still. Her arms are outstretched, and her hands and fingers are moving as though playing some invisible instrument. There is the shuffle of her sandalled feet on the roughness of the roof—shush—shush, si-si—shush—shush !

Tum-tum, tim-tim-tum, tam, goes the drum. The flute player throws back his head, and the music wails.

Her name is Ramleya : the Daughter of the Sand.

She is the pure semitic type of Arab. She is tall, and of alluring leanness, and her face is dark and long. Her eyes, kohl-smudged, are the shape of almonds. Her nose is beautifully aquiline, and has neat little protruding nostrils. Her lips are sensitive and sensuous, full, passionate. The eyes are closed as she glides, and her face is as impassive as that of a mummy.

Romance has laid hold of me to-night. For, as I sit and play with my cigarette, and watch the scene through the hanging fumes, I fancy some daughter of the ages has risen, and, whilst slumber still holds her, is dancing herself into life again. Her dark skin, the black of the kohl, the tattoo-marks of her tribe on the forehead, on her cheek, on her chin, together with the graceful posturing, creates a feeling that the thing is not quite earthly, that I have been reading Rider Haggard, and all this is the figment of a dream. It is weird.

Ramleya is wearing a bunched head-dress of black, on which spring sprays of barbaric gold ornaments.

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Heavy coils of night-black hair fall below the ears, are entwined with plaits of black wool, and these curve to the chin. Great ear-rings, heavy with gold, press through the tresses. About the neck are clustered innumerable gold coins, strained together. Her cloak is black but for a rib of gold straight down the back. Her dress is of soft, sheeny green lace spangled with gold. Her arms are entwined with gold. Her hands are gentle, and her long, tapering fingers, with nails henna-dyed, are heavy with gold.

Yes, all real gold. The Ouled Nail girl wears nothing but gold, chiefly coins. They indicate her prosperity; they are her fortune; they will make her the envy of the girls of her tribe when she goes back to the Sahara.

Black and gold is the scheme of colour of the Daughter of the Sand. That mask-face, eyelids down, wreathed in raven hair, whilst she dances with twitching-fingered, outstretched hands—as though seeking for someone in the dark—is eerie.

The night air is fragrant. One's senses yield to the intoxication of the occasion. The flute sings shrill, and a stronger beat is given to the drum.

Ramleya stands with her back close to her sister Nails. She shivers and her jewellery tinkles. Her eyes half open. With a wriggle of the body she shuffles forward. A languorous, weary, lovesick light comes into her eyes as she sadly smiles. Her arms drop tired to her sides, and she gives a half-droop backwards. Her dance is over.

The girls and the Arab servants of the house break into lofty falsetto cries of "Hoorol-lo-lo-lo!" which reminds me of the shouts of Red Indians in a Buffalo



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Bill show. 'There are sweetmeats and lemonade for the dancers. There are coffee and cigarettes for the guests.

Now the slip of the waning moon soars above the wide-spreading fronds of the palm-trees and suffuses Bou-Saada with light that is silvery. It falls on the group of Ouled Nails, a wizened old dame, aunt to one of the girls—most convenient of relationships—several children, an Arab girl in red—pretty, a model to an artist, who has pleaded that she might see the dance—and a Jewess, plump and with fine eyes, in white, but wearing a cloak of gold-shot crimson, whilst from her breasts to her hair she is laden with cumbrous gold jewellery, worth hundreds of pounds. A friend whispers into my ear she has been busy all the afternoon borrowing this finery from her friends in the Jewish quarter of Bou-Saada, so that in gorgeousness she may outdo the Ouled Nail girls. She does. She is Sultana. But her radiance is that of a girl in a pantomime. She lacks the calm, the dignity, the naïve impressiveness of the Arab girls.

A clapping of hands. The flute is lively and the drum sounds ardent.

Zohra has jumped forward, and is in an ecstasy of motion. She is the favourite of the party. She is young and the colour of a ripe peach shines through the brown of her face. Her eyes are big and wicked; her lips pout. When she laughs, she shows teeth that are perfect. She is always laughing, and then half turns her head as though shy.

A ravishing little creature is Zohra. She is lithe, seductively slim, and animated, and her style is that of abandonment. She skips sideways and manœuvres

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adroitly with her veil. She shakes her shoulders, edges in front of us, and whilst giving a lascivious sway of the tender hips, holds her veil before her eyes as though ashamed of what she is doing. She is frisky. All the Arabs clap hands and beat time as she dances.

The head-dress is like that of the other Ouled Nails: masses of black studded with gold. But her drapery is of mauve, of soft material, so that every movement of the lissom body may be seen.

Suddenly comes a twist in the music and the dance. There is melody suggestive of a stately gavotte. Zohra gives a curve of the arm. She stands. Veiled. Then she moves. She is not dancing. She is showing the suppleness, the rhythm of her arms and her tiny wrists, and the shape of her dainty fingers. She undulates, her little breasts pant, but the movement of the feet is hidden. All you see—all you want to see—is the coiling, the serpentining of the arms. It is a study in curves, charming in its gentleness.

Crash! The drummer and the flautist whack their mightiest and blow their hardest.

For Zohra has thrown aside her veil. She laughs. And the moonbeams glint on her teeth. She swishes forward with a houp-la! devil-may-care, this-is-the-way-to-do-it gesture, springs, gyrates, heaves her bosom. Her eyes flash passionate fire as she jumps from side to side.

She is a child of Nature. She is happy in her dancing, this little Arab girl, who has lived all her life in the tents of the desert. Bou-Saada is the only town she has ever seen. She cannot read. She knows nothing of the great world beyond the sands. She can just dance.

Lemonade for Zohra—and she drinks the contents of two bottles like the little guzzler she is. Sweetmeats for Zohra—and she munches them with greedy delight. Cigarettes for Zohra—and she sits by me and puffs and blows in the moonlight like a merry imp.

One of the painter men calls on a model, Nakhla (Daughter of the Date-Palm), to dance. She is a Bou-Saada girl, about thirteen, and when she is a little older she will be veiled like all strictly reared Mohammedan girls, and will not show her face after the manner of the Ouled Nail damsels. She is of an attractive Arab type, and one of these days her piquant Arab countenance will peep out from canvases in Paris Salons, and visitors will say: "That is a pretty Arab girl."

But then the Daughter of the Date-Palm will be veiled and married and kept to the harem, and will not be allowed to have her portrait painted by artists who come from the white man's land.

Poor little Nakhla!

She does not like to dance, but she will sing. So Nakhla raises her sweet treble voice in an Arab love song.

"The woman I have seen, she whom I love,  
She is like the star of heaven.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Red, red lips, and eyes so black,  
And pearl-white teeth—the sound  
Of her sweet voice enraptures me,  
Making me drunken with love."

We beat the palms of our hands and cry for more. Nakhla waits, and then sings "*Ya Asafi!*"—(Regrets.) Where had this child gathered the song? It recalls

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the days when the Moors were masters of Spain. It has journeyed like an ebb-tide of music across the hills and the sands of Africa :—

“How I regret the past that already is flown away. Ah! Allah! The Days of joy and pleasure, the evenings full of sweetness! Ah! Dwellings of Andalusia that we have left; alas! I will forget you never!

“No longer for us are the nights of Granada, city of delights. Ah! Allah! It is there that I have known the women who have taught me to love. Ah! Dwellings of Andalusia that we have left, I will forget you never!

“Ah! Allah! I pray Thee of Thy goodness that Thou shouldst suffer me to see once more that blessed abode. Ah! Allah! Knit me again with my desire, and make me to enjoy tranquillity. Ah! Dwellings of Andalusia that we have left, I will forget you never!”

We are all quiet—Arabs, French artist, English writing-man—as we sit on the roof-top and see the moon-bathed desert beyond the palms, and we listen to Nahkla. It is very sad, and at the end of each verse is a sigh as though the sought one would never be found.

Soon another song arises, a familiar song in Algeria, and one which is often heard in the cafés. It is the “Sally in our Alley” of the Arabs :—

“Ah! If only I could still keep young, I would plant for thee a garden of limes and pomegranates.

If thou camest, I would take thee to my home; I should be the lover and thou the loved-one.

I met her to-day at the garden gate; her figure was a bamboo for gracefulness, her cheek a poppy.

“I met her to-day at *Souk-el-louh* [the wood-market] Her handkerchief was in her hand; she was weeping and sobbing.

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"I met her to-day at the *Souk-el-djema* [the Friday market],

Her handkerchief was in her hand ; she was weeping and shedding tears.

"I met her to-day at the *Souk Sabat-er-ryh* [the top of the Street of the Gazelle],

I asked what was the matter. They said : She is his dear love.

"Ah ! If only I took thee to my house, queen of the gazelles, I would tell thee my desire."

We lounge and breathe in deeply the beauty of the night. The East has wooed us. The East is always calling, and the man who has come, comes again.

The pure air of the desert, a drowse in the shadow of the palms, a little bread, a little wine, girls to dance and to sing—well, I have no doubt that in a clammy, over-coat and fire-place country it would all seem a pulseless existence. But here, in Africa, in an Arab town, the ordinary man does not want more.

Next comes Semla, in green and silver. Semla looks cross, and she is not much of a dancer. But in the jiggle-jaggle of the abdomen, which is quite a classic performance amongst Eastern nations, Semla is famous. My taste is possibly decrepit, but though I have seen this stomach dance in many lands I do not find it entertaining. Some people like it because it is improper ; I dislike it for no other reason than that it bores me. It is the sort of abdominal acrobaticism that interests silly young fellows and very old men.

The moon begins to drop. Several of the lanterns have spluttered and gone out. A chill nip comes into the clear air. We beat our hands. The entertainment

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is finished, and we make our presents. Then, with lanterns in our hands we show the ladies through the Arab house to the silent street. Salaams, and they have gone.

Clang! clang! clang! and the French clock gives midnight. We climb back to the roof, and by the light of a quiet-flamed candle, we smoke our pipes and talk about the life on the desert among the Ouled Naïls.

## CHAPTER III

### THE DESERT

THE evening has now come, and the desert oozes heat like an oven on the cool. I am writing by candle-light in the corner of an Arab rest-house. Twenty yards away my Arab servants are sitting round a gusty, flaring fire of desert grass and watching the cooking of *kous-kous*; the light falls on their white clothing and bronzed limbs and black beards. The camels are crouching close by, munching and growling. Far away is the rise and fall of light—like the signal of a lighthouse; but I know it is a distant camp fire.

The desert is a great silence. There is no moon, but the sky is dusted with stars.

All day we have been slowly surging, surging, across the desert, and our speed has never been more than three miles an hour. The sun hit us, scorching hot. The lifeless air warmed, and there was no pleasure in breathing. The sands, studded with sage brush, sucked in the heat and gasped it out again.

A few ochreish hills, an occasional gully choked with rubble, where once a river flowed, a waste of hard, grey sand with tiny tufts of rank grass—that over and over again through the baking hours—such was the scenery.

The first few hours of the surge-surge of the camel is passable. But monotony comes; then weariness.

Yesterday I thought of the romance of caravanning on the Sahara. To-day there is no romance. I am an aching-limbed mortal, high perched on the hump of a camel, and the glare hurts my eyes, and the heat burns me, and my clothing is uncomfortable, and a mighty thirst lays hold of me.

I call my wants. The caravan is stopped. From what looks like the carcase of a goat slung by the side of a camel water is brought. It is muddy!

It is beautiful to drink. But the thirst does not go. I begin to wonder if ever I shall have a glass of cold water again. My mouth becomes sticky. I suck, but the saliva refuses to run. The roof of my mouth is like a glue-pot, and my tongue cleaves to it, and I pull it away with a dry wrench. I feel a glutinous moisture gathering in my throat. I try to spit it out, but I have no saliva with which to spit. I try to swallow it, but it feels as though a pebble has got in the way. My lips smart as though they were cracked and full of vinegar. My eyes ache with the sun glare and pain with the sand that has got into them.

The region is waterless. The land is accursed. Surge-surge we go—those slowly dragging three miles an hour, and the sun is high and the rest-place still far off. I deliberately sink into a sluggish state. The scrubby sage brush, the sand, the reddish-fired hills, the burn of the sun, are all full of cruelty. The camels surge-surge at an unconcerned, level pace. Some of my attendants are riding, others are tramping. We are all silent.

Allah created four angels to rule over the four kinds of desert. The first was the Chebka, cold and harsh—and the kind of desert known as the Chebka is dreary



and stony, and the valleys are full of evil spirits. The second was the angel of the Hamedan, a thoughtless angel who paid no heed to shade or water, and so the desert called the Hamedan consists of great barren rocks with no water. The third was the angel of the Gaci, who was loved by a woman who danced before him on the desert, and as she laughingly disappeared, she scattered precious stones and fruits from Paradise, pomegranates and dates; so the desert where there are oases is called Gaci. The fourth was the angel of the Erg—a woman angel, the other three were men—who drove the shifting sand before her, and so the desert which is all shifting sand, is known as the Erg.

My small caravan was made up at Bou-Saada. I hired four camels, and the chief of the cameleers was a fine sheik-like Arab, red-bronze in skin and glossy black-bearded, and he was slim and sinewy with much tracking across the desert. He had a beautiful name, Bachir Ben-El-Ameur, and he informed me with pride—so there must have been distinction—that he belonged to the tribe of the Ouled Ziane. As servant I had an Arab with a villainous face and a bad foot, Lakhdar Ben Bouchagour, whom I called Partington for short. Best of all I had as companion a rover like myself, a man who had served in the Navy, had lived on a cattle-run in Queensland for five years and lost his money, and was now spending his time painting cathedrals in Spain and native life in Algeria. We had two men to whack the camels, though their office was useless, for nothing but an earthquake will hustle a camel.

Whilst the beasts were squatting with our belongings—everything to last us the journey, from rough, straw-

filled mattresses to flour to make bread—they swore furiously. They swore in Arabic. Whenever I wanted to make my men “sit up,” I made furious choking noises at the back of my throat and the Arabs thought I was swearing at them in their own tongue, but that my pronunciation was defective. There is probably much that is beautiful in the language of Mohammed, but as half of it sounds like trying to eject a fly that has got into your windpipe I am confident that camel-growling is responsible for a lot of it.

The Arabs tell you that camels were once men, but they broke from the faith and Allah turned them into camels—their sins are represented by the humps—to carry the goods of believers. They growl at the remembrance of their past, and they still keep up an appearance of pride.

Nobody loves the camel. Of course he is “the ship of the desert” and has all the qualifications for the presidency of an abstinence society, for he can go without drink for a week. But he has the chronic hump; his glide is a slouch; he is the most supercilious creature on earth. If you pat him on the neck and call him “old man,” he looks at you disdainfully, shows his teeth, which are like a lot of dirty, bone egg-spoons, and swears. He tries to bite you when you get astride of him, and when you prog him to settle down so that you may get off, he is so disgusted that he gets sick. As far as I can discover, his diet is sand, sage brush, and weed that has prickles an inch long.

Just as we were bidding good-bye to the palm groves of Bou-Saada, and one of the Arabs was loading his gun in case we encountered robbers, an old man and a lad asked that they might join us. Right! The

old man was as brown as a berry ; he had humorous eyes and I envied the magnificence of his teeth ; he was as garrulous as a parish councillor. He was *hadj* ; he had made the pilgrimage to Mecca. Therefore he was a man worthy of respect. He took charge of us all. He knew the route which the gentleman with the beautiful name, Bachir Ben-El-Ameur, did not, though he pretended he did. Away we started across a parched land with heaving, reddish hills around.

It was hot. When we pitched camp to eat, I took from a basket a handful of grapes. Instantly my hand and the grapes were smothered in flies. We ate in discomfort.

Late afternoon and the heat blistering. The military authorities in Bou-Saada had told us there was hereabouts a *borj*, or rest-place, for the convenience of French officers. Even the *hadj* had never heard about it. But we saw trees. Trees mean water on the desert. Water means human beings. We struck an Arab encampment, and two Arabs showed us the way to a white-washed, two-roomed hut, standing by a glen through which ran a stream.

My friend and I were in a sweating, clammy condition. We slipped to the water, stripped and bathed beneath pink oleanders, whilst heavy tortoisecs rolled away from our intrusion.

We slept on the floor of the *borj*. In the dead of night a gun went off, and we heard groans. Our Arabs were all huddled in the next room. One of them had kicked over a gun, which went off and lodged a charge of shot in the knee of the *hadj*'s young friend. "It is written," is the Arab "*kismet*," and little fuss was made. The *hadj* burned a rag and cauterised the wound. We

poured olive oil on the knee. We hunted up the camels, hoisted the wounded man on one of them, and before morning broke we were once more on our way.

For two days, journeying seventy miles, we saw no water. We took our supply in goat-skins. It ceased to be appetising, got greyish, was luke-warm. Even thirsty men do not love water that tastes of dead goat and tar.

When we pitched camp to "boil the billy," two worn creatures crawled to us over the sand dunes. They were father and son—a bright youngster of not more than nine years—and they were tramping to Tolga to get work in the gathering of dates. They were distressed by lack of water and their tongues were swollen. We gave them what they wanted. The elder Arab poured meal upon his burnous, mixed water with it, kneaded a dough and made a cake on the ashes of our fire.

All that day we saw nobody. We camped on a hill-side, and, without any covering, slept beneath the stars. The place was stony, but we scraped places, so our sandy bed would not be too jagged. We collected tufts of dwarf bushes—little bits of burnt greenstuff that pushed up above the sand—lit our fires, kept them aglow with dried camel droppings which we had gathered. The camels had nothing to drink, but they roamed for an hour or so, and crunched poor fodder.

Night fell. The camels were brought in, compelled to lie down, and then we thonged their legs so they could not rise.

The camp fires flared. We knocked the bottom off a bottle, stuck it nose down in the sand, inserted a candle, and improvised a lamp.

It was an eerie but picturesque sight, the flames

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lighting up the group of white-robed Arabs and the drowsy camels.

Night fell like a curtain. My friend and I smoked and then, dog-tired, we went to sleep at seven o'clock. I awoke refreshed. The sky was a spangle of stars. I looked east for the dawn, for we must be up and away. We had a long day before us. I struck a match and looked at my watch. It was only eleven o'clock. The Arabs were hunched together near the camels. The whole world was still, except for the jaw-grinding sound made by the camels whilst chewing their cud. It was Saturday night, and as I lay there my thoughts wandered away to the crowded cities of England, aflame with electric lights and noisy with traffic, and I pictured the contrast.

At three in the morning camp was roused. It was a tedious business loading camels in the dark. We sipped water and munched native bread. A cold wind was blowing, and we shivered. It took an hour and a half to get under way.

For six hours we marched without a halt. We struck broken, rocky country—the rocks burnt red. Then, on the plains, we crossed a white stretch which brought the sensation of chewing chalk to the mouth, and hurt the eyes with its glare. Our Arabs were all for pushing on. They were afraid of running short of water. But we insisted on one hour's halt to make tea. The heat bit us like blasts from an oven, and we breathed hard.

There was a wretched little gnarled tree no higher than a table. We flung a burnous on one side, and then my friend and I took it in turns to lie in the shade.

Far on the horizon, thrown up by a mirage, was a



THE WAY FASHIONABLE IADILS TRAVEL

*Photograph by Em Frechon Biskra*



streak of dark green, an oasis. It was the date palms of Tolga. There was water—cool water. Hunger is terrible, but thirst is worse. We were pushing our camels, and travelling in the blaze of the day instead of resting. The poor beasts began to show signs of exhaustion. Their pace slowed down to a slouch of not more than two miles an hour.

The oasis! Blessed sight! But it took five long, racking, horrible hours—sitting in crumpled attitudes on the camels with the heat sapping all energy from our marrows, whilst we slowly sag-sagged towards the palms. One was too hot to think. There was nothing for it but to lapse into a resigned, comatose state.

Water at last! The camels drank. We dropped on to our knees and lifted handfuls of water to our white, cracked lips. The Arabs removed their shoes and gave thanks to Allah.

Be it remembered we were travelling in Ramadan—the great Mohammedan fast. Our Arabs would have a meal of *kous-kous* at sundown, sitting round a wooden platter, and each taking turn to have a colossal spoonful with a wooden spoon. They would tend their camels, and then lie down and sleep till, maybe, midnight, when they would start a fire and eat again. From then until after sunset, about eighteen hours, walking over rough ground, and often through sand which made progress laborious, they never ate nor drank.

*Kous-kous* was all they ever ate, not very invigorating diet, and on that, with their lips never refreshed by a drop of water, they could go forty miles a day over exhausting country. The staying-power of the Arab is nothing short of wonderful.



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There must be something in the climate which staves off hunger. Even we two white men did not suffer. We had a slab of *kous-kous* cake, not over clean, and a drink of tea at three o'clock in the morning. Between ten and eleven we had the same, not because we were hungry, but because we thought it advisable to eat. But in the evening we did not do badly, for we had tinned soup, tinned meat, *kous-kous* cake, some fruit, a bottle of wine, coffee and plenty to smoke.

As we crossed the great endless plain before Biskra—with the straight line of the southern horizon lying like a mauve sea—we touched country where there was water.

Groups of lowly-built, dingy, brown tents of the nomads dotted the land, and mixed herds of sheep and goats were being slowly led, not driven, to their feeding-places. Also there were heavily equipped camel caravans setting off for the south, the men walking and the women, gorgeously clad, peering out from a kind of gaudy-coloured tent erected over the camel humps.

These caravans do not travel more than from ten to twenty miles a day—we did double that distance—and the guttural shouts of the men could be heard over long distances. A camel, or really dromedary, for the beast hereabouts has only a single hump, shows that hump fine and large when in good condition. Work him hard and the hump almost disappears.

We found the Arabs in these caravans genial fellows, though, when camping, they rather edged us away from the tents where the women were. All the tents are alike, except that the tent of a sheik has generally some plumes waving over the top. There is no furniture. The mats are covered with sacks of grain or figs or dates. It is noticeable how little civilisation has touched

the lives of these people. They carry nearly everything in skins or woven grass. I never saw a hempen cord. All their ropes are of camel-hair.

One caravan we encountered must have consisted of over a hundred camels. Moving along in something like Indian file, it looked, in the far away, like some long snake crawling across the desert. Mostly highly coloured print goods from France were being taken to the Saharan towns, and these were to be bartered with merchants for dates.

Now, although at places we saw the desert stretch illimitable and flat to the very dip of the world, we learned that the desert is not necessarily an endless, flat expanse of sand. There were areas of dry marsh-land, with the surface splotched with alkali. There were mighty knuckles of burnt rock, and the wind had blown the sand in a sweep to their very top.

Not a cloud in sight. The sky peerless blue. A shimmering haze hanging over the world.

The desert is full of cruel beauty. It fascinates and it kills. You have agony and you suffer, but always the heart desires to penetrate the great mysterious beyond.

## CHAPTER IV

### UNDER THE TENTS

NEVER-ending is the Sahara desert. Sand and stones, and then sand and sand and sand. Yet, where underground springs burst the crust of earth, vegetation is luxuriant. The aridity of the Sahara is due not to the soil but to the climate.

The northern Sahara, as extensive as France, supports only a little over a quarter of a million people. They grow dates, or they are nomadic and rear horses and sheep and goats.

I came across encampments of Arabs, bunches of low, wide-spreading camel-hair tents, and in the morning the men led their flocks to skimpy pasturage. One wondered what eating stuff the sheep could find, and yet they looked well-nurtured.

The Mohammedan is always hospitable. In the towns of Algeria he is usually called a Moor, and the name Arab is applied to those who live on the plains. The town native has picked up a good many vices of the Europeans, and is often a blackguard. The Arab who is a nomad, and keeps to his tents on the desert, is a gentleman, though a liar. I do not think the Arab is brave—his fear of attack at night when I camped with him was ludicrous—but he is as frank as a boy. He leads the truly simple life ; his fare is of the homeliest ; he spends much of his time in the hot silence of the

desert ; he has no books, no newspapers ; he is happily ignorant of the great outside world and all its problems ; his world is his tribe and his sheep and his tent.

He is religious. There is much that is sad in the large, lustrous black eyes. His music and his songs are lamentations, and strange is the sound of Arab music when heard, flute-like, over the sands ; then it entwines the thoughts, and one listens with hushed interest as to the murmur of a fountain and the chirp of a cricket.

I got to love him as one loves something that one does not quite understand. I could never fathom his mind. He often lied, but I learnt that the lie had always behind it the intention of giving pleasure and to avoid the truth which might give pain. It is against his religion to have reproductions of the human figure. At first I always made the request when I wanted to take a photograph, and usually I was told his faith forbade his sanction. But if I snapped him *sans* permission he not only did not mind but was pleased, and asked that he might be sent a copy of the picture.

He likes to hunt the gazelle, but his gun is an old flint-lock, and its carrying distance is short. One morning we came across a herd. They were off scampering like lightning amongst the dunes. One of my men went off stalking, and he did not come up with the caravan till late in the day. He had killed nothing, but he had been very happy. The Arabs are fond of hawking. I heard of an Arab who let his falcons loose every year after the close of the hunting season, and recovered them by hanging a pigeon in a net in a bush and hiding himself. The falcon swooped to seize its prey, and got entangled in the meshes of the net.

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Sometimes we pitched our resting place near water and an Arab encampment. There was a heavy calm in the fading splendour of the day. In the sunsets, so gorgeously magnificent, was something spiritual, holy, inciting to reverence. The far-away hills were like red-hot iron softening to grey, and the desert was a sea of dreamy heliotrope. Bits of the world were in silhouette, and died in vapoury diaphanousness. The clouds were gauzy pennants in the sky. The air was pungent with the sharp scent of the sage. The silence—broken only by the far-away voice of the herdsman to his flock—was exquisite.

The Arab women were shy—or, perhaps, they were only discreet in the presence of their masters. They pulled the veil or turned their heads. But I soon saw that if one ignored the women—did not go peering about and looking at them—they proceeded with their work and took no notice of the stranger. Their features were regular and often semitic. As they hobbled in and out of the tents they were moving bits of colour, for they wore the brightest of jackets and startling-hued pantaloons. On rough frames they wove the burnous, and they crouched before smouldering fires kneading *kous-kous* for the evening meal.

We made friends with the Arabs, and shared our food with them. They were delighted with our tinned meats, but I had always to give my assurance there was no pig—the unclean beast. Rarely does the Arab eat meat, but when he does he has no prejudices except the hog. Camel's hump is a delicacy. He will eat locusts and serpents and dogs, and by no means turn up his nose at jackal—and this cowardly animal frequently crawled round our camp. The Arabs believe

that to give the heart of the jackal to children will make them wise, but madness comes to those who eat the brains.

I disliked the sneaking Arab dog; he is a sort of lean dingo, and has never any courage except to bark. Yet he is a good watch-dog, and when desert pirates crawl up in the night to steal camels which have strayed a little, can be trusted to raise a yelping clamour.

We drank water from the goat-skins, muddy and with a flavour of intestines. Why drink this when there was fresh spring water at hand? Because, said the Arabs, fresh water causes colic and fever! Well, one of them must have been drinking fresh water, for he had fever and his temperature was high. I felt his pulse, and proceeded to get some quinine from my little medicine-chest. He would not take it. He suspected it. He had a number of charms about him, and they did not seem to do him much good. The talkative old *hadj* fussed about, put a fleecy sheepskin on the man's stomach, and then rubbed his big toe with a piece of silk. Was it what might be called Moslem science which healed him? Anyway, the fever had gone by morning.

It is interesting that these people had inoculation against small-pox long before the days of Jenner. They will not, however, be inoculated with virus from a calf. The pus must be taken from a small-pox patient and inserted in the soft skin between the thumb and the first finger. We have an old saying about taking "a hair of the dog that bit you"; I have always regarded it symbolically, as meaning that when a man has been carousing overnight and feels limp in the morning,

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the most effective pick-me-up is another draught of alcohol. But in the Algerian Sahara, if an Arab is bitten by a dog he seizes the animal, pulls out a hair and applies it to the bite. If the dog is mad, he kills it, and opening the body, takes out the heart, which he grills and eats.

The poorer nomads have great faith in written prayers. A scribble by a *hadj* is regarded as miraculous. The incantation can be on a bit of paper or on an onion, or on the shell of an egg, and when the paper is swallowed, the onion munched, or the egg eaten the sick man at once begins to feel well again.

Anything that comes from Mecca has all the potency of an American patent medicine. A man who has been to Mecca can set up in business as a doctor without passing any troublesome examinations. A date from Mecca, a sip of water from the sacred spring of Zem-Zem, above all a grain of sand gathered from the grave of the Prophet, are invariably efficacious to drive out the *djinns* which are rampaging in the body of the sick Mohammedan.

My friends told me that the number of nomadic Arabs is on the decrease. Here, as in more advanced countries, the move is towards the towns. And, just as in the advanced countries, town life apparently works for degeneration of the race; the Arab, taken from the tents, and put into the towns, loses much of his simplicity of character.

The Arabs, however, are not the greatest wanderers; there are the blue-veiled Touaregs of the far south, who are really Berbers. After the Arab invasion, when North Africa yielded to Mohammedanism, the tendency was to settle. It was anarchy and successive con-

quests which sent the Arabs roaming from place to place, searching for feeding-places to graze their flocks.

These nomad tribes travel north as the summer heats approach. The shearing takes place about April, and tribesmen are sent to the towns which dot the northern edge of the Sahara to learn the best markets for sheep and wool. Then there is a move forward, an advancing village of, maybe, a hundred persons : men, women, children, all their earthly belongings. It is a wonderful spectacle to meet such a caravan, travelling with the slowness of a camel, horsemen always on the outer fringe to guard against attack. Camps are pitched a mile or so outside towns like Kairouan or Biskra, or Laghouat or Djelfa, or even in the hills. But when the autumn rains come, and new pasturage may be sprouting on the Sahara, camp is struck, and away the tribe travels south, taking, maybe, two months before they reach the feeding-grounds which are theirs by custom.

There is a good deal of brigandage, though this is considered a gentlemanly profession, and does not prevent the Arab, in all other respects, being an excellent friend. The French authorities, however, do not appreciate the romance of camel raiding. The Arabs are good to their horses, but they have no tenderness for the camel. They believe that in a previous existence it was a human ill-doer, and is now a camel as a punishment for sin. Why should they soften the wrath of Allah ? The horse is a noble animal, and is useful in desert robbery. Says Abdel-Kader : "The poor Arab needs a horse if he is to fall on the goods of his enemy, and to seize them and



enrich himself, just as the rich Arab needs the horse to protect his fortune and his life."

The true Arab has the gipsy spirit. He must live in the open ; he must be free from restraint ; he must have great distances for his eye to range ; he must be master of his own time. A French general, travelling south, told a number of chiefs they ought to build houses. This advice they took as an order, and they built them. When the general returned he was glad to see the houses ; but the chiefs were encamped outside, and the houses were inhabited by goats, which stuck their heads through the windows.

Yet there is no doubt that the use of the tent on the Sahara is decreasing. That does not mean improved social conditions ; very likely it means poverty. Mud-houses are being built, fewer camels, horses and sheep are reared ; agriculture is being more followed ; the family is becoming independent of the tribe, and there is more individualisation in the tribe. The French are doing much to encourage the natives to settle as agriculturists. A splendid work is going on in the hills in the way of afforestation. Yet I am afraid that occasionally there is more energy than discrimination. The pastoral life should not be checked to grow trees in soils incapable of tree-growing, and it is not wise to stunt the breeding of sheep so that indifferent wheat may be grown on shingly, poor ground.

In the past there has been the wholesale destruction of forests in northern Algeria to provide pasture for flocks. Brushwood has disappeared to a great extent, and sand-dunes now heave where once were shady woods. The sand is encroaching like a sea

upon the north. I remember at Ain-Sefra—where after a storm the sand is frequently ankle-deep in the streets—remarking what looks like a hill of sand. Each gale blows the southern slopes over to the northern slopes. So year by year it appears to be moving. The French are doing their utmost to keep it in check by carting stable-manure to the dune at the beginning of the rainy season. The manure is spread, the rain brings vegetation, and this paves the way for tree-planting. In the early morning there is generally a breeze from the desert, nothing more than a pleasant fan to the cheek. But the powdery sand runs before it. It comes and it comes, and struggling vegetation is buried beneath it. And far south, where the sand has conquered, and where the wind blows and the sand is stirred as with a tornado, and the sun is blackened out, and all the region is a seething sea of sand, great caravans have been lost for ever.

The Arabs talked of these things as we sat round the fires in the dark of the night. The quick eyes and the dazzling white teeth of the *hadj* gleamed in the glow. He told us that, notwithstanding the shifting sands, he had never lost his way all the years he had travelled the desert. He used all the landmarks he could; but instinct was his chief guide. I had noticed that frequently the *hadj* tramped far ahead of my caravan, stopped suddenly, stood quite still for a minute, and marched straight on. By circuitous talk—for the Arab, whilst ready enough to question the stranger, dislikes being questioned himself—I gathered the reason.

“Mussulman prayers,” said the *hadj*, “are very  
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grateful to Allah, but they are granted after a time, that their pleasure may be prolonged. The prayers of infidels are so hateful that they are answered at once."

The other Arabs never failed to pay consideration to the *hadj*. He was the most persistent talker I ever met, though four hours' talk and four hours' walk under a blazing sun did slacken him down a little. It was after the evening meal that he waxed garrulous. I searched out my sleeping corner amongst the baggage—though I always had a dread a camel would tread the life out of me some night—and went to sleep blinking at the stars. I would awake hurriedly; the fire was reduced to embers; everybody was lying down. But the *hadj* talked, and always at the top of his voice.

All strangers are regarded as possible magicians, because they are strangers. It was thought at first I had some sinister motive in denying I was a doctor—all foreigners are expected to be doctors—especially as there was evidence against me in the fact that I was carrying medicine. The *hadj* was pleased, because in camp he was the oracle amongst the party. He rather posed as having magical powers by reason that he had been to Mecca. Out of his cataract of talk I often snatched a fragment of interest. Barbers and blacksmiths have some semi-magic attributes, for both classes are connected in some way with heating, bleeding and cauterising with hot iron. Iron drives away evil spirits, and, as with us, horse-shoes bring good luck. The *hadj* nevertheless proclaimed contempt for old superstitions. He remembered the time when, if there was a plague in a town, and

Arabs desired to enter without fear of infection, they would get down on all fours, and bray like wild asses. Then they were quite confident they were impervious to disease, and invariably escaped—some evidence of the effect of faith.

The fear of the evil eye is widespread amongst the natives, and the *hadj* taught me the way to resist it; stretch the arm towards the person with the evil eye and close the hand as much as possible, except that the first and third fingers must be outspread. A dreamy-eyed person runs risks, for his far-away look is certain to be interpreted that he is gazing at the devil. Anyone with an evil eye has power to injure by reason of envy. He has only to see the something he admires and covets, and it at once begins to pine away and die. There is possibly some connection between the fear of the evil or covetous eye and the wearing of the veil. It is not generally known, but in distant times the veil was worn by young men as well as by women. On the other hand, the veil may have been imposed to prevent the wearer exercising undue influence upon others. In many parts of the Mohammedan world the women are completely veiled. Yet I fancy the general practice of veiling so that only the eyes are revealed—the most beautiful of an Oriental woman's features—has a very disturbing effect.

As a protection against the evil eye, many things are employed. The representation of another eye—indeed, anything that gleams and glitters like an eye—has a good result. Animals' horns are a magical defence. In the Sahara horns and entire skulls are placed over the house-tops—(consider whether the custom of placing the horns of animals in the entrance

hall of a European house may have its origin in the Oriental practice)—and I frequently met peasants with boar tusks, attached to a string, hung round their neck. The hand is the most potent against malign influence. All over northern Africa, painted on doors, hung in houses, and used as jewels, are representations of hands, called "Fatma hands" by Europeans, though the Arab name is *Kham* (five fingers). The number five, *khamisa*, is so powerful that it is ill-omened to use it in conversation.

I was sauntering one early morning, and met an Arab with a jar of goat's milk. He immediately offered the jar to me, not that I might drink, but that I might dip my fingers in it and have good luck for the day. And when I got back I found the *hadj* in some perturbation. He had a tear in his burnous. I said I would give him some cotton and thread and he could soon repair it. "It is not that," he replied, "but this tear signifies I am going to have trouble in my affairs." Thus superstition hedges the whole life of an Arab.

Sneezing is favourable as signifying the expulsion of evil spirits—and do not Anglo-Saxons cry, "God bless you!" when a friend gives a loud "chi-chou"? But yawning is detestable to Mohammedans, not by reason of defective manners, indicating a boredom which should be suffered without sign, but because, with the mouth wide open, who can say what terrible evil spirits will slip down the throat?

Though Moslem maidens have no choice in a husband, a girl's thoughts dwell on love as soon as her mother commands that she wear the veil. The talk is always of love-making, and the stories are

rather shocking. An Arab girl of fourteen will artlessly tell an impropriety which would make a seasoned clubman hide his head behind his newspaper. But to the Arab girl there is nothing wrong or lewd or improper. It is a natural thing to tell a story about passion. Oh ! shocking, shocking, to rear a girl with no thought but of being love-mate to some man ! Wicked to teach her she has but one mission in life, a mission good Christians never mention in polite society ! The relation of the sexes is something which the Christian softly blushes for, and acts as though some apology were necessary ; anyway, it must be secret. Not to keep the relationship secret would give pain to worthy folk with families. The Arabs, however, talk about love and passion as the chief things in life—and there is no shame. Sensual, indeed, are they not ? But the Moslem does not send his girl to ill-ventilated and over-heated workrooms to become wan, crook-figured and anæmic. He never lets her drudge her life out behind drapery counters for miserable wages. He does not turn his young wife out at six o'clock on a gnawing winter morning to toil long hours in cotton and woollen factories. His ideal of womanhood is not the same as that of the Christian ; but in no Mohammedan countries do you see slouching, unkempt, slobbering mothers hanging round the doors of gin shops. He does not talk about the high character of women, but nowhere does he have his women so degraded as hundreds of thousands of women are degraded in Christian lands. He—but this is getting rather “preachy,” and I have no right to preach.

A young girl with no husband coming along inquires as to her destiny by taking one of the yard-long combs used for carding wool, and dressing it in a pious man's clothes; the dummy is provided with beard and moustaches of wool, and crowned with a turban. It is then set against the wall. The girl sits by it and incense is burnt before it, and the request is made: "My lord comb, who art near the head of the girl, free her by marriage." Ceremonies meaningless to the European, are enacted, all of which lead the girl, during the night, to see a little old man appear, and he tells her the future.

The lights have been extinguished in the tents. The coy Arab girls are, I hope, sleeping and dreaming sweet dreams. To the rattle of the *hadj's* tongue I fall asleep. I wake with a start and shiver, for the night is cold. And a little old man is before me, grunting that it is an hour before dawn, and it is time to make coffee and catch the camels and get on our way before the rising of the sun.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CITY OF BEAUTIFUL CHILDREN

WE went outside the gates of Tlemcen and down a winding path to the soft shade of trees. There we rested, for it was hot, and looked over the most fruitful plain in Africa to the hills. Between a dip we caught a glimpse of the sea. Winsome children were playing about, and I gave them sweetmeats in memory of Sidi-El-Haloui. So we got their friendship, and two little boys and three little girls, dancing and laughing and their eyes full of happiness, showed us the Mosque of Sidi-El-Haloui.

Now Sidi-El-Haloui is the saint of the children. When the Moors were in Spain he was born at Seville. He was a good man, and he made a pilgrimage to Sidi Okba, near Biskra, where sleeps the Arabian warrior who subdued North Africa to Islam. But on his return he found Tlemcen, a beautiful spot. So he settled there. He made sweetmeats which are called *halouat* in Arabic, and that is how he came to be known as El-Haloui.

He was very fond of children, and the way he got them to listen to him when preaching was by giving them sweetmeats. The children of Tlemcen in those days were very like the children of to-day. Wide-eyed and eager, they gathered round his stall and he gave them what their little hearts hungered



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for, and then he told them about Mohammed, and how boys and girls ought to be kind, so that they should grow into good men and women. His manner was soft and his smile gracious, and everybody loved him, and crowds gathered round to hear what he had to say.

The Sultan heard of the saintly confectioner. So he got him to go to the palace to teach his sons. The Grand Vizier did not like the sweetmeat-giver to be so popular. He charged him with being a sorcerer, and outside the gate, where the mosque now stands, his head was chopped off. At nightfall, when from the walls of the city the *bouab*, or gate-keeper, was shouting for all without to come in before the gates were closed, a voice was heard: "Close the gates; there is no one outside, except El-Haloui the oppressed." Each night, for seven nights, when the gate-keeper cried, that was the strange answer he got. The people of Tlemcen became afraid. The Sultan came, and when the *bouab* cried, the Sultan heard the reply. He knew a great crime had been done. The Grand Vizier was buried alive in a case of mortar, and as the mortar hardened he died in agony. The people, to show how sorry they were for the killing of the confectioner-saint, built the beautiful Mosque of Sidi-El-Haloui. And all this took place nearly six hundred years ago.

But the children of Tlemcen love the saint who gave sweetmeats to the children in those far-away days, and they delight to play in front of the mosque. They play on the steps of the mosque and about its portals. Sometimes they are noisy with happiness, and Mohammedans who are saying their prayers

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hear them. But nobody is ever cross with the children, because they remember that Sidi-El-Haloui loved them.

The children of Tlemcen are the most beautiful in the world—not some of them, but all of them. Is it because through the centuries they have known they have a special saint to themselves? Is it because their mothers are happy to the heart that their little ones are under the protection of El-Haloui? I wonder!

To saunter through the lanes of Tlemcen was like a stroll through a land of fairies. There was much to see—and I saw it with the Professor and the American Girl—but best of all it was to get away and find the corner where children were wont to play, and then, whilst pretending to be gazing vacantly around, to feast my eyes on these mites of loveliness.

The Arab boys, with just a hint of the olive in their skins, were jolly little chaps, with shaven bullet-heads, plump cheeks and impudent, mirthful eyes. They were healthy and frank and happy, and with tight lips they chased each other and punched each other, and dare-devilled on the edge of dangerous walls.

But I liked the little girls best—maybe that was a weakness of the flesh as a man. And when I come to think of it, they were not real little girls: they were little women of six, eight and ten years of age! They were lithe and dainty, and carried themselves with a manner. According to local custom, their hair was dyed to the tone known as burnt gold, and it was luxurious, curly hair, which fell like a cascade over

their shoulders. Their complexions were as soft as a ripe peach. Perfectly regular features, nose, lips and ears, with none of the indefiniteness of feature of girls in some other countries. Perhaps they knew they were pretty. Anyway, there was a coquettish look in the large brown eyes when they caught the stranger glancing at them. Perhaps it was as well that in a few years they would have to wear the veil when in the streets, or terrible would be the consequences to young male Algerians. They were never awkward, but always graceful, and when playing, the way they moved their half-bared and well-proportioned arms, and made gestures with their pointed, henna-tipped fingers, was something to raise a smile of gladness in recollection.

Here is a fruiterer's stall piled into many pyramids of gaudy fruit, radiant pomegranates, blushing apples, soft green grapes, the deep purple of fresh figs, the red and yellow of tomatoes. Let us buy a bunch of grapes, and then, sitting within the shadow of the broad sack awning, take note of the children. Now there is a tiny maid in saffron, not more than seven years, moving briskly about the vegetable stalls, prim and business-like, carrying a basket half as big as herself, and—in strict accordance with the habit of the East—beating down in price the vendors of sweet potatoes and aubergine. There is another girl, black and lustrous-eyed, with warm life showing through the sallow of her cheek. Her dress, the cheapest, loosest-fitting, home-made garment imaginable, is a splash of vermilion. She looks almost Italian, with the tight-fitting handkerchief over the head; but the ear-rings are large and as she walks

bare-footed, there is a jingle-jangle from the silver anklets she is wearing.

Now a couple of children swinging their clasped hands, and singing as they trip along. Exquisite ! Could an actress on the stage carry her little peaked, purple cap more jauntily than the elder girl of eight, whose hair, however, is black and glossy, free from dye ? What a lithe, nervous figure, and how that sash of varied tints, with the knot in front, gives distinction to the beflowered print frock, whilst earrings of rough pearls fall like big beads. And her companion—shorter, brighter, with a turban of wine-hued velvet and a gold waistband round her white frock—just see how she shakes her bracelets as she raises her arm to give her turban a rakish tilt ! The sight is good to the eyes.

What a toddler this little thing is, keeping close to its white-shrouded mother ! But a picture. The hair is an aureole of auburn. The little dress is of pea-green, held with a silver belt, and the sleeves are of muslin with gentle embroidery. Toddler, did I say ? Well, I use the word to indicate she was small, maybe five years of age. But she steps along with a sort of crisp stride, and looks at you with the confidence of a grown woman.

Perhaps you prefer this naïve little thing in grey, with blue and orange-red stripes and a sash of green—an outrageous blend, and yet somehow, in this warm Africa rousing no sense of incongruity ? Or this girl, eleven maybe—almost ready for the veil. What a pity that such a lissom figure should be hidden in voluminous folds of white, or that you should no longer see those gleaming teeth when she laughs, or

her charms be revealed by that creamy head-dress and the frock she is wearing. Look at that other girl ; see her fawn eyes, note her elfish alertness as she steps along, a little bundle of lilac carrying a jar of water upon her shoulder. There is a study in brown ; her hair is brown ; her eyes are brown ; she has a frock of brown, and there is a broad brown ribbon across her forehead.

Let us walk up this lane, the neighbouring walls washed blue, and beneath a fig-tree see a group of children playing in the sunshine and the shadow. Just look at that gambolling boy in his blue coat, red shirt, and little, baggy, mustard-coloured trousers. And that little girl, a splash of canary, hopping about in the sunlight. Mark the gracefulness—that is particularly to be noted. And what a lot of jewellery—ruby glass about the neck, and ruby ear-rings and ruby bracelets !

Oh, yes, I know it would all be so bizarre and stagy in a drab-skied Western land. But here, how the children fit the picture ! And they are all so beautiful. I must buy more sweets, and pretend I am a distant, distant relative of Sidi-El-Haloui.

All the way from Oran the Professor has babbled about Tlemcen, the ancient capital of the Arab west, the very home of pure Moorish art, a citadel of high culture when Europe was still under the shadow of the Dark Ages.

“ Well,” said the American Girl, “ I never heard of Tlemcen till a week ago.”

I thanked her ; she was more courageous than I dared be.

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"Tlemcen," said the Professor, addressing us as children needing instruction, "is the most interesting city in North Africa. In Roman times it was called Pomaria——"

"Not the place the darling little dogs come from?" exclaimed the Girl.

"I did not say Pomerania, but Pomaria," replied the learned one, with rebuke in his tone, "and afterwards it was called Agadir. The present city, founded some nine hundred years ago, was called Tagrart, and it was not till centuries later it got the name of Tlemcen."

"Guess it must have been a pretty naughty city to have required so many aliases," observed the Girl. "When will it change its name again?"

"When people visit a historic city, it would be to their advantage if they read something about it beforehand." The Professor spoke sententiously.

The Girl from the United States looked at me and smiled. "Is that rudeness intended for you or me?" she asked.

"Tell us some more, Professor," I said. "I am benighted in ignorance. Never mind this young woman, who is sure to enlighten us that the Grand Mosque—I suppose there is a Grand Mosque in Tlemcen—won't hold as many people as the Auditorium in Chicago, and that the Singer Building in New York is ever so much higher than the most graceful minaret—that is, I suppose Tlemcen is famous for its minarets. Go on, Professor. Stuff me with facts. I want to gorge on knowledge. We are really very fortunate to have such a friend, aren't we, Girl?"

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The Girl muttered something about rudeness, and then exclaimed with a gush, "Rather!"

"Yes," said the Professor, "when the Arabs swept across Africa they made Tlemcen their capital in the west. It was the centre of much conflict, and various dynasties held it in power, like the Idrissides, the Almohades, and the Abd-el-Ouadites."

"How remarkable," said the Girl, looking from the railway carriage window. I gave her a look of censure. "Who did you say the last gentlemen were?" she asked sweetly.

"The Abd-el-Ouadites," answered the Professor, "and it was in their time that Tlemcen was the centre of learning and art, and when the beautiful mosques were erected. Of course, when the Turks came——"

The Girl shrugged her shoulders. "Oh, yes, and the horrible Turks came and spoilt it all. But what a lot of reading you must have done to learn all this. I know the names would get horribly muddled up in my head. But is it romantic? I am sure I shall not like Tlemcen unless it is romantic."

A little look of laughter came into the Professor's eyes. "Now I'll tell you a story: In the *mechouar*, or citadel, there was once a silver tree with all kinds of singing birds in its branches and a falcon on the top. When the wind, worked by bellows at the foot of the tree, reached the singing birds, each sang its own proper notes. When the wind reached the falcon it uttered a piercing cry and the other birds stopped singing. And this tree stood in a courtyard which was paved with marble and onyx. Also there was a strange clock which was built there three hundred

years before the clock which the Sultan Haroun al-Raschid gave to Louis XIV. of France, you know."

The Girl and I nodded—though really we did not know.

"Above the clock," continued the Professor, "was a bush, in which a bird was perched with wings outspread over its young. At the foot of the bush was a serpent slowly issuing from its lair. At the stroke of each hour two eagles came out from two doors and dropped copper balls from their beaks into a copper basin. These rolled inside the clock, and caused the serpent, which had reached the top of the bush, to hiss and bite one of the young birds, whilst the old bird called in vain for help. At the same time, from a door in the clock appeared a young slave, and in her hand she carried a book in which was inscribed the hour."

"How perfectly lovely," exclaimed the Girl; "and shall we see these wonderful things?"

"No," replied the Professor, "for I think they were taken away by some medieval Pierpont Morgan."

The romantic city of the Arabs.

And we arrived by train. We rode in the most conventional of hotel omnibuses. The road was lit with tiny blobs of electric light. And we stayed at the Hôtel de France—a funny old place with a covered courtyard, and the bedrooms opening upon the encircling balcony. It made one rather think of the picture in the novel where Mr. Pickwick has his first glimpse of Sam Weller.

Out for a stroll in the evening, and the high, black city walls very mysterious. The streets were dark,



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for the little electric blobs only pin-pricked the darkness. But in the centre of the town there was a flaring light ; also the stench of acetylene ; also the shriek of a gramophone.

We sit before a little French café. French officers are playing cards and puffing cigarettes. French soldiers slouch by in groups, noisy Zouaves in baggy pantaloons, their soft fezzes stuck on the back of their closely cut heads and the tassel dangling on their necks, and cumbrous-clad chasseurs, their much-too-big swords constantly getting in the way of their much-too-big boots. The streets are gay with people. It is the last night of the eight days' Jewish festival in commemoration of the time when Moses struck the rock.

The French rule Tlemcen. The Arabs are in a majority. But it is the Jews that have the business and make the money. Quite a number of Jews are here, descendants of those who were expelled from Spain, and they boast they are the most strict and orthodox Jews in the world. The Arab retires to his house within an hour of sundown. But it is in the cool of the evening that the Jewish people come out to promenade. There is the old grandfather Jew, patriarchal and long-bearded, in the costume of the East which his fathers have worn for centuries. Then his son, wearing the voluminous, coloured breeches of the Orient, reaching below the knee ; he wears slippers, and instead of the enveloping yellow turban favoured by his father, he wears the fez. His coat and vest are European. But the grandson is a modern product : in clothes of the latest European cut, an American soft felt hat worn

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rakishly, French boots, a cane, waxed moustache : and he is smoking cigarettes. The women ! The old dame, wizened, with kohl under her eyes, has a bright, wide-spreading, pleated skirt, and a shawl is about her shoulders ; she has a little black skull-cap, to which is attached a string of golden coins. But the young miss ! She is in neat-fitting, walking costume, and over her wide-plumed hat waves a magnificent feather.

The families walk and laugh and make groups at the cafés and drink beer. The young fellows lounge, and tap the top of the marble circular tables with their canes to call the waiter. The gramophone sings as though it had sand in its throat. And all this is the western capital of the Arabs !

The picturesqueness of the East—how it is being washed away by the floods of civilisation ! Civilisation ! Here is an Arab who ought to be at home, sleeping, like a good Moslem. He is drunk, reeling, gesticulatory, on Christian alcohol. He has a sprig of jasmine over the ear. He lunges forward to a café table, and begins to slobber and talk maudlin. He is a fine-featured Arab, but he is drunk. He leans on his arms and dozes. A French waiter quietly steals the sprig of jasmine. Jews and Christians laugh at the joke.

The reading of guide-books is a weariness. The ideal guide-book has yet to be written. It should be like a friend in whose taste you have confidence, taking you by the arm and going a stroll together.

The American Girl was sure the Professor had been consuming guide-books for weeks. I owned

an idea that he had volumes stuck in his case, and that he read them each morning whilst sipping his coffee, and munching his roll in the privacy of his bedroom. He browsed on facts.

We went to mosques. Indeed, we seemed to do nothing but tramp from mosque to mosque. We spent more time in mosques than the strictest Mohammedan is expected to do. We gushed over the curves of the Moorish arches until we were tired of each other's adjectives. At the gate to each mosque we pushed our booted feet into large, cavernous *babouches* (large red slippers with a crushed heel), so we had to go slithering from place to place. Once the Girl gave a scream—she had lost one of the slippers. There it lay, a splotch of red rebuke on the edge of the holy carpet. Her infidel feet had desecrated the sanctuary. Mohammedanism had been outraged; and I recalled some story of a riot and intended massacre of Christians because dainty Christian boots had defiled a mosque. But the custodian went to the slipper, and, with a smile and a bow, placed it before the Girl.

Of course we went to the Grand Mosque—the Djama-el-Kebir—where, the Professor said, lay buried the saint, Ahmed-Ben-Hassan-el-Ghomari. The Girl wanted to know who he was. The Professor replied vaguely that he was a good man; whereupon the Girl said pertly that she thought as much.

But we noticed that all hurrying Arabs as they passed the door gave it a peck of a kiss.

We walked the spacious, columned, and sombre interior, and listened to the Professor on the acme of Moorish art, with the reminder that the best to

be seen at Cordova is only a replica of what we were seeing at Tlemcen. The Girl wondered if she could buy the two giant Damascus-wrought candlesticks, for she said they would look real sweet in the hall at home. I took a fancy to a chandelier, and the Professor began a disquisition on how it had been presented by the Sultan of Morocco in the fantastic days of the early thirteenth century. But the custodian interrupted him with the bland remark that this chandelier was a copy made by a Frenchman, and he did not know what had become of the original. Not an accurate copy either. On the chandelier was a bracket for a candle for each day of the year. The Frenchman provided three hundred and sixty-five brackets. If he had counted the brackets on the original he would have found only three hundred and fifty-four—for the Moslem year is eleven days shorter than the Christian year. That is why every Mohammedan fast and festival is eleven days earlier each year, and it takes the turn of thirty years for all the memorable religious ceremonies to take place in every part of the year.

“So,” observed the Girl, “though the Moslem year is now about six hundred years behind the Christian year, it will catch us up. Do tell now, Professor, how long it will be before the Moslem year will be the same as the Christian year?”

But the Professor said there was a lovely view from the top of the minaret. It was really high and square, and not unlike the Campanile at Venice, except that in places it was faced with green tiles. The Professor said the tint of the tiles showed what artists the old Arabs were. Then the custodian said

that many of the old tiles had fallen out, and that new tiles, made in France, replaced them. The Professor explained that at such a distance it was impossible for the ordinary eye to distinguish between the real and the imitation.

It was a long, corkscrew climb, getting to the top of the minaret. The Girl said that any civilised country would insist on the introduction of an elevator. She said this when we were at the top, and she stood with her back against the wall and looked flushed, and asked whether it was worth while anyway, for there were buildings in New York twice as high. "Yes, sir; twice as high, and they have elevators to take you to the top," she told the Professor. "I guess there is no iced water to be got up here?" There was no iced water.

"Who built this stack?" she demanded, turning on the Professor.

"This minaret," said he, "was constructed by Yarmoracen, who was the first king of the dynasty of the Beni-Zeizan, in the thirteenth century."

"That was before Columbus," added the Girl; and then, after a glance at the sun-pocked old brickwork, "Yes, it looks as if it must have been built about that time."

We peered down on the white-roofed, mosque-dotted town. We heard the calls of the Arab merchants in the market. We saw the cool olive groves, and let the eye travel across the wheat fields of the plain. We breathed deep the fragrant air. And we agreed that Tlemcen was a beautiful city in a beautiful land.

Near the Grand Mosque was the little house where

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lived Ahmed-Ben-Hassan, five hundred years ago. Down a broad, whitened passage we went, with the sun on the walls and the pavement all broken with shadow by a trailing, matted vine-tree overhead. The house, with a little door and two little windows, like indents on the wall, was on one side, and on the other was the place where Ahmed-Ben-Hassan prayed. The vine crawled over wide trellis. Here were mothers, enveloped in white, with their sick children. The mothers prayed. They bent the wan-eyed and emaciated children forward, and told them to kiss the wall. The lips were pressed to the wall, and then the mothers kissed the children and carried them away, confident the all-beneficent Allah would hear a mother's prayer when the shrine had been kissed by the little one.

Healthy, pretty children were playing about the wall, and on the top of a neighbouring mosque a stork had built its nest.

The green door is unlocked, and we go into the dank, tawdry chamber. Cheap paper on the walls, flimsy tissue paper rosettes, and in a cage two doves—the sacred bird—constantly cooing. There is a bedstead, gimcrack, hung with curtains of yellow. On the bed is a heaped bundle covered with a dull silken cloth, and beneath that lies Ahmed-Ben-Hassan.

Mosques, more mosques—all white and severe in their architecture, save for the frequent Moorish arch. All gloomy, all pillared; all with worshippers kneeling on the mats; all with roofs of cedar, sometimes plain, some with carved and painted geometric designs in dark green and faded gold on a ground of red, softened almost to brown, and the *mihrab*, a carved

stucco archway, the carving delicate, poetic, geometric—every curve of every line in harmony with the other lines. The Professor waxed enthusiastic in an old mosque which is now a museum. The *mihrab*, so he told us, is regarded by all Orientalists as the most perfect piece of Arab carving in the world. The Girl said it was like lace.

The Professor, for a staid man, grew rapturous over every old tile he saw. You cannot escape from tiles in the East. They are on the floors, on the walls, in the roof. His delight was genuine.

But everybody who goes to Algeria raves about the tiles. What colouring! What harmony! What bold lighting! What softness of hue! That is how they talk, because everybody else talks like it.

People talk tiles, and the visitor who gushes the most enjoys the satisfaction that he or she is the most artistic person in the room. Not to clasp your hands and exclaim: "Oh, isn't it lovely; did you ever see such exquisite colouring?" is to proclaim you have a commonplace soul, or do not mind being looked at askance as devoid of the artistic sentiment. That is why ninety-nine persons out of every hundred tourists you meet in Mauretania talk tiles, tiles—till you are weary of tiles.

There are tiles—beautiful tiles—and a great sweep of colour embedded in a white wall, in the shadow of an overhanging roof, and yet catching the purity of the African light, has an effect which is grand in its simplicity. But examine the tiles closely; they are ill-made, badly fitting, the glaze is spotty and the colours run. They are garish. If used to line the walls of a lavatory in a European home they would

be regarded as the work of a drunken amateur tile-maker, and would rouse laughter. There is more enthusiastic nonsense talked about Oriental tiles than about anything else.

Tut, tut! You, my dear lady and gentlemen tourists, you do know all about tiles. It is only silly people who rave, without the knowledge you possess. As for the man who would not have his lavatory adorned with the average tiles which the average tourist goes into ecstasies about—well, he is quite past all artistic hope, isn't he?

The Professor was a zealot. In the Mosque of Sidi Ibrahim he clasped his hands. Ah, the dull lustre of the tiles—very much like the tiles at the side of modern fireplaces. How the browns harmonised with the yellows—not very certain browns, and rather dirty yellows. Did not those diamond-shaped pink tiles make the adjoining black tiles stand out?—true, but I have an idea the same effect could be secured with tiles manufactured three months ago as much as with those manufactured three centuries back. On plaques is the Arabic inscription: "Seek instruction from the time of your cradle to the time of your tomb."

Another burst of admiration before the ceramics climbing the rectangular minaret of the Djama Ouladel-Imam. Near it hangs a little jar of sacred oil. If you touch the eyes with it you ward off blindness.

"Let us give each other a pat with it, and then get back to lunch, for I have the appetite of a cow-boy," said the Girl.

The sirocco was blowing—the sky grey and the



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air hot and lifeless, and every tissue in one's body as languid as boiled catgut.

Yet the American Girl decided she would walk. Everybody went to the village of Bou-Medine. The Professor babbled by the way.

Bou-Medine was one of the saints, and the Girl observed that Tlemcen and its environs had as many mosques as State Street, Chicago, had dental parlours.

The Professor declined to be disturbed by her irreverent comparisons, and unfolded that Bou-Medine was born at Seville——

"Where the oranges come from," whispered the Girl.

And that his real name was Choai-b-Ibn-Hussein-el-Andalosi.

The Girl asked him to write it down.

When he had done so she remarked it was well he was a saintly man and changed his name, for he would never have gone through life as an ordinary man with a name like that. "I think I would have called him Chobby, for short," said she.

Well, it appeared from the Professor's discourse that the gentleman had a sort of Rhodes travelling scholarship, for he went to the universities at Seville, Granada and Fez, came to Tlemcen and made the pilgrimage to Mecca. Then he became an itinerant lecturer, visiting Bagdad, Bougie and Cordova, and finally settled down as permanent lecturer at Tlemcen. Either because he was a good lecturer, or the people were glad when he could lecture no more, he was laid to his long sleep in a beautiful mausoleum at El-Eubbad, which so impressed the village that they changed the name of the place to Bou-Medine.

We saw the village perched on the hillside amongst much green. We panted along the dusty way, rested under cherry trees, and said the heat might have been worse than it was. Also we tramped through a grove of *koubas*, where are buried innumerable worthy men. The number of worthy men Tlemcen has turned out in its time is a fine testimonial to its sanctity. But they are all dead now and decently interred, and their tombs are in decrepitude, and look very picturesque in photographs.

We left the road and climbed a rugged, ragged path, which caused even the Professor to pause. Whilst he mopped his brow he invited us to admire the beauty of the plain. The three of us talked a lot about the scenery, because that allowed us to halt and recover some breath. We had reached the word "ravishing" when two little Arab boys came scurrying down the path. One toppled over, and had a bloody nose in consequence. He howled and rubbed the tears amongst the mess on his face. We gave him our sympathy and a coin, whereupon he instantly recovered, gave chase to the other boy, and banged his head.

So we reached the mosque and saw all there was to be seen. There were doors of many-coloured arabesques, and the court was like a stage-setting in an opera. We went down marble steps which suggested the approach to the hot-room in a gorgeous Turkish bath, and in a little chamber—a vault—saw the faded silks and old-gold embroideries wrapping the remains of Bou-Medine. The light was pellucid and soft, and the only noise was the ticking of an ornate Venetian clock, and the cackle of our impudent

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youngster who wanted *baksheesh* because he had roused the man who kept the key which gave us admission.

The Professor drew our attention to some tiles. Then the Girl suddenly felt faint, and we climbed up the steps and nearly fell over a devout Moslem who was on his knees saying his prayers.

To the mosque! Stop and admire the great bronze doors, green with age. They were the work of a Spanish artist, and he made them as the price of his ransom. The courtyard, encased with violent-hued tiles. Tiles from the centre fountain had gone, and French workmen were replacing them with modern tiles—even more violent than the original tiles. The Professor had something to say about the conduct of the French Government in not trying to match the tiles; but one of the Frenchmen looked up and said that the Mohammedans preferred the new bright tiles to the old ones.

However, it was a drowsy afternoon, and the Girl sat down in the shade and invited us to think we were living five hundred years ago. The water gurgled in the fountain, and fat pigeons fluttered down and took a bath. The mosaic of tiles framed the easternness of the scene—the arches, the sculptured inscriptions from the Koran, the carved marbles, the drone of the old men praying—though I dared not say so, for the day was too luscious to have it spoilt by any more disquisitions on tiles. We did no more than glance into the cool shadows of the mosque, where curiously wrought Oriental lamps were gently swaying in the wind. White was the note of the interior, with here and there tracery of dull blue

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and chocolate on a ground of wine-colour—very soft and very harmonious.

But how dirty the village of Medine is ! We met a garrulous old man, who pointed the way to a hut where tiny cups of coffee could be obtained, and delightedly showed us a cheap looking-glass which he was taking as a present to his granddaughter, who was to be wedded on the morrow.

The sirocco falls, and a little vitality comes into the air. Autumn has tinted the trees, and far away, ascending a serpentining road, comes an Arab boy, singing, whilst bringing in his herd of goats for the night.

The quick dusk of the East is enwrapping the earth. And with evening all the flowers and the trees of the land seem to offer their fragrance as incense. The atmosphere is heavy with sweet odours. As we stroll back—meeting white-wrapped Arabs and shrouded women as we near the black old walls of Tlemcen—we are silent for a time. Then the Girl becomes poetic.

She tells us she is glad to begin feeling the romance of the East laying hold of her soul, and that there can be nothing more lovely on earth than living in so perfectly sweet a place as Tlemcen, which is real old-time, and where one might forget all about Western civilisation. She says she wants to get away from all the noise of modern inventions.

And just then the genii of the hills arranged there should be the whistle of a railway engine, and that the omnibus of the Hôtel de France should go rolling by.

“ Yes,” remarked the Professor, breaking his own

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reverie, "there is no place in North Africa where Mohammedan history has been more effectively made than in and about Tlemcen."

"And demonstrated by tiles," added the Girl, making an endeavour at facetiousness.

"Take Mansoura," said the Professor.

"Why?" asked the Girl.

"The entwined history of Tlemcen and Mansoura is as wonderful as anything on earth."

"Who—who was Mr. Mansoura?" asked the Girl, tentatively.

"Mansoura is, or rather was, a town," said the Professor with slow gravity.

"Oh!" and then the Girl remarked in sudden after-thought, "Thanks!" After that came a smile and a pleading: "Do tell us all about Man—man—what-you-call-it."

"I think we might go there this morning," said the Professor. "You know that Tlemcen has existed under various names for over two thousand years. And you know that when the Arabs conquered northern Africa they made Tlemcen the capital of the west; that it was here that Arab civilisation rose to its highest; that the arts were cultivated, and that Tlemcen was the mother of that exquisite Moorish architecture that you have seen in Spain. The Grand Mosque is contemporary with the glory of Granada. Besides being a seat of learning, Tlemcen was, in the middle ages, the centre of exchange between Europe and the interior of Africa. I'm not boring you?"

"I love it," said the Girl.

"Well, rival Sultans sprang up in the thirteenth

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century. There was the Sultan Abou Yakoub, who besieged Tlemcen for seven years. They were not fighting all the time, and, therefore, Yakoub occupied his soldiers in building a new town about two miles to the west of Tlemcen. He called it El Mansoura, which means the Victorious One. When peace was established, Mansoura was evacuated, and there, for seven years, it stood like a new house with nobody in it. But trouble broke out between two races of Arabs, the Beni-Zeigans and the Merinides, and Abou-Hassan, the Black Sultan, again besieging Tlemcen, made Mansoura the seat of his government. Thousands of men were engaged in making it the grandest place in North Africa, and the Black Sultan began to erect a beautiful palace. A great wall, surrounding the entire city, was built. I have read that Mansoura was famous for its magnificent palaces, its gardens and its streams. It was prosperous, and there was much trade. The mosque was marvellous, and the minaret was one of the highest in the world. But in time the Merinides were defeated. The Beni-Zeigans, who had Tlemcen, were not going to have this rival city so near at hand. So it was ruthlessly destroyed, and nobody was allowed to live there, and I believe nothing now remains but a piece of the famous minaret and some pieces of the old wall. Shall we go and see ? ”

It was a pleasant, fresh morning, as we went through the Fez Gate and set out on the road which, if we had continued long enough, would have landed us in the capital of Morocco. The only people we met were natives coming in to market—big, swarthy Arabs astride ridiculously small donkeys, so that the

heels of the riders' slippers sometimes trailed on the ground—and groups of laughing girls with faces uncovered when at a distance, though careful to pull their hoods when passing, and spying upon us with one eye. Vineyards were on either side of us. A land of peace and bright happiness. It was easy to let fancy roam back through the centuries to the time when fierce fighting took place.

And there was all that remained of Mansoura !

There was the towering slice of minaret, standing straight like a sentinel. The mighty walls, which were two miles round, have disappeared, except in one place, and a few battered remnants is all the evidence of the eighty stout towers. The mosque, with its thirteen aisles and nine transepts, has gone, though there still stands the arch with the inscription : " Abou Yakoub Youssef Ben-Abd-el-Hak gave orders for the construction of this mosque." There is something noble about the ruined minaret. Time has eaten the stone-work and gnawed at the lace-work carving. The few remaining violet-coloured stones above the horse-shoe arch hint at the beauty of the façade when it was all breasted with such stones. The door is delicately carved—and it is just like the *Puerta del Vino* at Granada. But it is imitation, for the original has been removed to the Louvre.

" Originally," said the Professor, " the minaret was one hundred and twenty feet high. The Black Sultan was in a hurry to have the mosque built. He employed Mussulmans, Christians and Jews. I believe, if you ask the natives, they will tell you that the part constructed by unbelievers has entirely gone,

and only this part of the minaret, erected by the Mohammedans, remains."

All the palaces are gone—all the shady gardens are laid waste ; nothing but desolation is around. We strolled about a mixture of debris and earth, and we knew we were on the site of the Sultan's palace, for here had been found a stone with the inscription : "The construction of this fortunate dwelling-place was ordered by the servant of Allah, Ali, son of Abou-Said, son of Abou-Yakoub, son of Abd-el-Hak, and was completed in 1345."

The Girl and I were thankful there were no tiles about. But the Professor was disposed to preach a little on the vanity of princes.

"Now," said the Girl, "you two men sit down and smoke your pipes, whilst I make a sketch to send to Papa !"

Few people go to Tlemcen. I wonder why ? As the Girl said, it is not long there before you begin to feel that the romance of the East is laying hold of your soul.

Go into the lower town, see the variegated throngs in the market-place, pass the little cupboard-shops where the veiled Oriental women are quietly haggling over the purchase of finery ; peep up the mysterious and dark alleys. Spend an afternoon at Ain-El-Haout, idle an hour feeding the brilliantly scaled fish that dart in the fountains, and listen to the legend. Long, long ago a beautiful virgin was pursued by Djafar, son of the King of Tlemcen. She fled to Ain-El-Haout, and there she escaped by turning herself into a fish. That is why the fish are sacred,



and you would be mobbed if you were so evil-minded as to cast a pebble at them. If you would have scenery, go to El-Ourit, and, sitting amongst the trees, watch the tumbling, crashing, dashing waters.

But always you will come back to Tlemcen, with its buildings of the genuine Arab-Berber style, where the customs of the people are just the same as through the centuries, undisturbed by conquest and the coming of Europeans, and where the blithe-hearted and pretty children are the cause of much joy.

"I guess," said the Girl, "that if I hadn't been born in the finest country on earth, I would like to have been born in Tlemcen. Professor, cannot you tell us something to prove this was the site of the real Garden of Eden?"

## CHAPTER VI

### ARAB WEDDINGS AND HOME LIFE

WE had been out beyond the Fez Gate at Tlemcen to watch the setting of the sun. Sunsets in northern Africa are beautiful, but this was the most beautiful of all.

It was all gold and red, like a weave of metal that has been molten, and is still liquid, though hardening, whilst near the top was a slash of blue, and near the bottom was a trail of green. Reds and golds softened to opalesque, and the fire was like the blood-gleam in a black opal. The clouds were as filmy as the down beneath an emu's wing.

But it all went quickly. Where the sun had dropped was like the mouth of a flaming pit. The fire reflected on the dove-tinted clouds and yet all were brushed with a ruddy glow. But that went quickly also, giving place to weird sea-greens, and died into greys and blues and then purples and black, and then there was nothing but black.

And the night wrapped the world in a hurry.

In the city we heard the thrill of wild music, and then we saw a blaze of torches. Rampant joyousness clove the air. In the centre of the tumult was a man on a horse, caparisoned gorgeously. He was a bridegroom being taken by friends to his little Arab bride. He was self-conscious, and sat his horse awkwardly,

for he had no grip of the reins. There were two friends at each side of the bridle, and a friend on either side had hold of the stirrups. The bridegroom was pale. He was wrapped in a deep blue burnous, and his black cap had a long silver tassel which dangled over his forehead. The merry clamour of his friends was deafening, and the narrow streets flamed with the flambeaux, and the air was fragrant with reek and smell.

In front sedately walked an elderly man in white, the father of the groom, and his friends, and friends of the girl's father. Then came younger men waving lanterns and poles decked with flowers. Next, hired musicians—flautists and drummers and tambourine whirlers, and they all made the loudest din they could manage. Round about and behind the horse—on which sat the mournful groom—were his friends flaring coloured lights, mostly red, and tossing fireworks about and running forward and sprinkling the supposed happy man with rose-water.

The street was packed. At halts there were special outbursts of pandemonium and coloured lights, and the musicians did their best, and friends hoisted each other upon their arms so they might kiss the groom. There was one halt in front of the Grand Mosque. The bewildering scene, the throng of gay-robed Arabs, the decked bridegroom and the gorgeous horse, the lights playing on faces and on the overhanging trees and the white walls of the mosque—well, it fascinated the eyes.

Of course, we joined the crowd and squeezed with the rabble along the pressed lanes. On the rooftops were white-cowled and veiled women—their

white figures showing distinctly against the black sky—displaying the world-wide interest of their sex in anything to do with a wedding.

Bang went crackers, swish went the rockets, swizz went the squibs. White lights, blue lights, green lights, red lights; the whole way bobbed with lights. And the noise—it never ceased. Then we heard shrill feminine shrieks, “You-you-you-you-you!” The girl-friends of the bride now crowded on the house-top where she was. They were giving greeting to the husband. “You-you-you-you!” they screeched with metallic insistence.

Pushing and jostling and laughing, a great concourse was about the doorway of the house. The groom dismounted, made a dash for the door. The door was banged, and the girls went frantic with their yell, “You-you-you-you!”

Other women flitted about in the street. The night had fallen, and they came from the trapdoors in the walls, and moved like ghosts on a stage. Sometimes they were alone, sometimes they were accompanied by girls of their household, sometimes by an ebon-complexioned Soudanese. They stood in groups apart from the men, and their white *gandouras* showed harmoniously against the dark background of the night. It was all romantic. Some of them removed the veil in the shelter of the dusk and revealed their charms. But as I wandered by, their veils were dropped. A side-glance, and each woman peeping over the veil seemed to be looking at me with great liquid eyes, fixing upon me the bold glance of one conscious she could see without being seen. Often I felt there was something uncanny about those great

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eyes of the solemn women, always bright and always black. Big, unblinking, dreamy, sensuous eyes which filled one with a nervous curiosity as to what their owners were thinking about.

In the afternoon I had encountered a throng of young Arab women, all veiled and all screaming, "You-you-you-you!" and in the centre was a bundle of hidden young womanhood. That was the bride being taken to the bath. She had left her parents' home, would bathe with her girl-friends, put on clean raiment, and then be conducted to her new home, where she would receive her husband at night. On her way veiled women hastened from their houses and sprinkled her with holy water as a symbol of fertility. As she entered her new home, she broke an egg against the wall that plenty might enter with her.

The only security in a Mohammedan marriage is the dowry handed over by the husband as the price of the wife. Prices vary. A village girl can be bought in marriage for from thirty to fifty francs. A girl who can weave a burnous is sold for from three hundred to eight hundred francs. At twelve years of age a girl is valued according to her prettiness—and the mother and sisters of a young man desiring to get married tell him how pretty she is. But old men, widowers, or men who want to increase the number of their wives, or who have put their wives away, get the prettiest girls, because, as a rule, they can pay the biggest sum. A Mohammedan woman does not lose her maiden name on marrying, and she has a right to retain her own property. The mother of a son gets jewellery from her husband; but if she gives birth to a girl she gets abuse.

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Arab girl babies wear talismans on their arms. Later in life they wear them round the neck, and when grown up they wear them on the head. Childhood is a very happy time for the Arab children. There is no restraint put upon them. "They are only unreasoning children; let them do as they please," is the attitude. Girls are tattooed as tribal marks, or to resist evil spirits, when they are about twelve years of age.

They have very pretty names: Aicha, "life"; Djohar, "pearl"; Kreira, "the best"; Nedjma, "the star"; Safia, "the pure"; Zohra, "flower"; and Yamina, "prosperous." The French are doing a good deal towards the education of Arab girls. There are schools where they are given a simple, useful education. In Algiers is an embroidery school, and the young girls make hand embroidery of such exactness and regularity that it looks as if it must be machine-made.

Many tears must be shed when little Djohar, aged twelve, knows she is to be married to an old fellow of sixty—but she does as she is told. There is an Arab saying: "Woman flees from a white beard as the sheep flees from the jackal." The perfect woman, according to an Arab poet, "should laugh quietly, should not be a gadabout, nor annoy her husband or neighbours; she should not have a long tongue, or blush with difficulty. She should be a housekeeper and give good counsel. If you meet this woman, you will be mad with love of her; if she leaves you, you will die for want of her."

It is a mistake, however, to think an Arab wife has no influence in the family. She has a good deal,

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and sometimes it extends to the whole tribe. If an Arab woman is childless, she will touch with a fingertip the tame lion taken by *marabouts* from village to village, picking up coppers by the way. Having done that, she will be confident her desire will be rewarded.

Polygamy is practised—the Koran allows the Mohammedan to have four wives. Very few have four—the luxury is too expensive. It is no good criticising the sons of Islam. They will say that you can content yourself with a single wife whom you consider as your equal. In rich European establishments the servants look after the household needs. With the Arabs, on the other hand, servants brought in from the outside bring only trouble. Monogamy however, is the rule. Harems are rare.

Family life, especially in the towns, is perpetually troubled with jealousy and intrigue. Neither husband nor wife always remains faithful, though infidelity involves risk of life. It is said that the Arab woman, the day's work over, murmurs this description of her life, "Burden-bearer by day, beloved queen at night." All the Arabs have trite sayings. Apropos of truthful speech, the Arab who mistrusts a man will say, "The tongue has no bones; you can turn it which way you please." Arab policy is expressed in the sayings: "If you are the tent-peg, have patience; if you are the mallet, strike," and, "Kiss the head that you cannot cut off," i.e. bide your time for vengeance on the infidel.

Since the French occupation, slavery has been prohibited. But that slavery exists, especially in southern Algeria, is without doubt. As a rule the

slaves are treated well and are contented. They have considerable freedom, though they can be sold to another owner. If ill-treated, a slave, by seeking the protection of a saint, can always claim to be sold into a new home. The slave traffic from Timbuctoo is now stopped, but there is still a good supply of slaves made prisoners in feuds between the tribes of the Sahara. Hans Vischer states that the extent of the former slave trade across the desert can be slightly estimated by numberless skeletons which one meets along the caravan routes south of Murzuk. The unnecessary cruelty of the Arab traders who drove their flocks of slave children over the waterless roads can be understood when one bears in mind that they could afford to lose eighty per cent. of the children on the road, and still make a profit on the remainder. The slave negress who bears a child to her master is given the name of Ouem-el-Ouled (mother of the child), and enjoys the same rights as the lawful wife. Her son is not illegitimate, but is one of the family, and shares the inheritance with the other children.

On the whole, married life in Algeria has its ups and downs, very much the same as in more civilised countries. And this notwithstanding that husband and wife know absolutely nothing of each other's temperament before they are married. A woman who wishes to gain control over her husband goes to a negress who takes some of her hair, nail-parings, saliva, wax from her ears, etcetera, and after various mystic rites, makes up a pill which the wife is to try to give to her husband with his ordinary food. A husband on leaving home often ties a knot in a tuft



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of grass. That is an omen, for if untied on his return he assumes his wife has been unfaithful.

Arab houses are not comfortable places, and the Arab house which is rigged up by a European in "Arab style" is as near the real thing as an English village in a comic opera is like a real village. The real Arab house is a dingy, unwholesome place, despite the fountains and the tiles and the pillars round the court. Carpets are the only luxury of rich Arabs. They pile them on one another, making heaps of them, and they treat them with respect, for everyone takes off his shoes to walk over them just as at the door of a mosque.

There are no harems in Algeria—parts of the house set apart for the women. When an Arab calls upon another, the females withdraw. They never join in the feasts of the men-folk, but they will watch them through peep-holes. The Arab woman loves jewellery and fine clothes, and receives her lady friends in the afternoon, and they talk about clothes and love-making. Dishes of sticky sweetmeats are handed round. The guest invariably licks the dish; for is it not said, "Whoever eats from a dish and licks it afterwards, the dish intercedes with Allah for him," and her—I suppose. They sip much sugared coffee, and puff cigarettes and sprinkle each other with musk. An Arab woman does not think much of a European woman unless she is decked with jewellery. To own jewellery and not to wear it on every possible occasion is something the Arab woman cannot understand.

When you have an Arab meal it is well to remember it is Arab, and not be constantly wishing European

manners were adopted. If you compare you will not enjoy yourself. It is best to eat according to the custom of the natives, and enjoy the satisfaction you are playing the Oriental. You sit on the carpet in more or less of a circle. A dish of peppery food is placed in the centre, and everybody helps himself. You hold tight to your spoon whilst another dish is provided, composed chiefly of chopped meat and raisins mixed with olive oil. Then the *kous-kous*—boiled semolina with vegetables intermixed and slabs of boiled mutton on the top. The host helps himself first—to indicate that the food is not poisoned—just as it is customary to enter a room first to show it is quite safe. You take a piece of boiled mutton in your fist and gulp it. You make a ball of the *kous-kous* and gulp that also. Then dates and then coffee.

I had a young Arab friend, aged about twenty, and he told me his father had arranged for him to be married to the daughter of an old schoolfellow. For some years my friend had been collecting not only goods with which to furnish his house, but pretty things to present to the forthcoming wife, whom he had never seen. He would not tell me how much his father was going to pay for the girl except that it was many, many francs. Was she beautiful? His mother had reported that she was. The negotiations had been concluded only a few days before. His father had made a ceremonious visit to the father of the girl; the money matter was arranged; then a sheep had been killed and roasted, and a great feast took place. Both parents solemnly announced the betrothal.

I told him of the scene I had witnessed at Tlemcen, and asked him if he would have anything as fine as that ?

"Yes, and finer," he exclaimed ; "my father will go with a retinue to bring my wife. He will take many presents for her relatives and jewels for her. Oh ! it is all arranged. My mother says she is very beautiful, with gazelle eyes and lips of coral. She is to have a lovely *melhafa*, and she will ride on a fine mule, and there will be music all the way. My mother will meet her at our house, and my sisters will take her to the bath. In the evening my friends will take me to my bride. She is very beautiful. I would not talk to an Arab so ; we Arabs never talk about our women to one another. But with you, a European, it is different."

And he, like most Arabs I met, though not placing women on a pedestal, said he had always understood Mohammedans treated women better than Christians did. Women are veiled and locked in their houses because the husbands care for them and are jealous of them. Said Mohammed respecting women, "Either keep them with kindness, or in kindness part from them." And again, "Woman was made of a crooked rib ; if you try to straighten her she breaks." And again, "The greatest calamity to mankind is woman." Woman is lower in faculties than a man, and if she is killed the punishment is half that for killing a man.

Divorce is common. The simplest plan is repudiation by the man ; then, if the woman wants her full freedom she must return the value of her dowry. But a woman can also divorce her husband for ill-

treatment, or if she discovers her husband has been betrothed to some other woman before—a plan which would work rather awkwardly in some “infidel” countries. As I have said, a married woman retains her own property. But the husband can “have the law on her” if, being pious, she wants to give all her money to charity—she must not give more than one-third. When the husband dies she can claim a third of his property.

Yet the Arab's main thought about woman is that she can amuse him. Does not the Talmud say that nine parts of sexual passion was given to the Arabs, and the remaining one part is divided amongst all the other races of the world ?

## CHAPTER VII

### ALGIERS IN RAMADAN

ALL through this hot, clammy day strange cries have come from the Kasbah.

It is too soon in the year for the sickly, lungless European, who must have sunshine, to begin his "winter" in Algiers. So no quiz-eyed tourists have been passing along the narrow ways of the Bab-a-Zoun, or have been sipping coffee in the Bab-el-Oued.

On the square-built, white, flat-roofed houses of the Arabs the sun has poured all day with scorching virulence. From the dark, shadow-laden ways rise mixed odours, stenchs that are foul, scents that are aromatic, a medley of offensiveness and deliciousness, product only of lands where the minaret pierces the level tops of the town and the voice of the Imam may be heard chanting the *muezzan*, "Allah only is great; there is but one God, and Mohammed is his Prophet; come to prayer, come to adore; Allah is great."

Guttural Arabic has mixed with the smells of the heat. In these pinched ways there is endless jostle and hurry. Were you a Gulliver, and your size proportionate to that of a tremendous creature, you might kneel on the sands at the back of Algiers and with one fist resting on Mount Sidi Ben Nourh and the other crushing the trees on Mustapha Supérieur,

peer down into the Arab quarter and be fascinated with the haste of human beings, like myriad white ants pushing along those crooked alleys. There is great noise.

The swarthy Arab, fleshy-lipped and lusty-eyed, comes with an easy swing of limb down the street of steps, the Rue de la Kasbah. His long white robe, the burnous, hangs gracefully from shoulder to heel. His head is swathed in white, but thick plaits of camel-hair twist about from brow to neck. There is hauteur in his stride, an aristocratic hoist of the chin, and you notice his hands are soft and his fingers long. He spits frequently. As there are two kinds of angels, white and black, he always spits to the left, to show he cares nothing for the black angels.

In little holes in the wall, danksome alcoves, are shops. There is the man who sells foodstuffs, dried fruits—even tinned things brought to North Africa by dogs of Christians. His hand is broad and his fingers stunt, and his countenance is of a coarser grain: a M'ozabite, a tribe in the far south, Moham-medan, but unorthodox. The men leave their women-kind and journey over the Sahara to Algiers to start shop and make their fortune in four years; then go back towards the Equator and buy more wives, and are happy dozing their days in the shadow of the date-trees.

Strange folk these M'ozabites. From the land of M'zab they come, far south, only two thousand five hundred strong. They are proud, clannish, and detest other races; but they never bring their wives or children. They form the strictest of trade unions, and are all organised. They govern each other

severely. They must drink neither wine nor coffee, nor must they smoke or lead irregular lives. If so, they are bastinadoed by other M'ozabites. The desert part from which they come is called Hamedan (the scorched). In the centre is a sort of circus formed by a belt of shining rock, with steep slopes toward the interior. One who has been there says that, seen from the exterior, or from the north and east, this belt of rocks presents the appearance of *koubas* (tombs of holy men), in stories one above the other, without any kind of order, and looks like an immense Arab necropolis. Nature itself seems dead. No trace of vegetation rests the eye; even the birds of prey seem to fly from these desolate regions. The relentless sun throws his rays on these walls of whitish grey rock, and produces by their shadows the most fantastic designs. But the traveller on reaching the summit discovers in the interior fine, populous villages surrounded by gardens of luxuriant vegetation relieved in dark green against the reddish background of the river-bed.

In M'zab the women take the combings of the hair and fling them into running water, which is the symbol of life, and will prevent baldness.

Who are the M'ozabites? There is a tradition they are Phœnician, and came from Tyre. The Arabs chivvied them to the rocky land of the Hamedan. But now they are coming back, and the Arab hates the M'ozabite because he is commercially prosperous, as some other people hate the Jews. An old Arab assured me that when a M'ozabite died, donkey's ears grew out of his head.

Slim and quick-moving come Kabyles, industrious,

dirty warriors of the Berber race. Coal-faced negroes who have filtered across the wastes guarding Timbuctoo, strut, laugh and show their teeth.

Trade is busy. A sheep has been killed, and customers are haggling over bits of the carcass. Coppersmiths, in shops which are holes scooped out between an oozing wall and the black earth are hammering at their pans. At the corner of a crowded way is a stall of fruit, purple grapes and yellow grapes, basins of black olives, stacks of vividly red capsicum, other stacks of the bluish aubergine or egg-plant. A shaft of sun which falls on a thin, gimcrack, hoisted awning breaks the glare, and suffuses the fruit with an artistic glow. Squatting on the floor are makers of Arab garments. Youths with grimy, open-breasted shirts and ragged, loose knickerbockers, and wearing skull-caps of claret hue, run barefooted and sell sprigs of jasmine. The Arab loves the smell of the flower, and will idle the sultry afternoon toying with amber beads, reciting verses from the Koran, and smelling his spray of sweet jasmine. Little donkeys, laden with bundles of charcoal, tramp the cobbled streets, and have the curse of Allah brought upon them when they smudge the burnous of a passing Arab. Men carrying great bundles cry for a way to be cleared. Water is being drawn from a sink and carried off in quaint-shaped ewers.

Streets are tortuous, but high and straight and white are the walls of the houses. Most are eyeless, for few windows break the monotony of their surface; but the gleams of the sun have made brilliant effects, and out of the squalor come tones of mauve and saffron and indigo, a kind of incongruous harmony



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which no scheme of colour could procure, but which is just there to delight the soul of the man who owns the beauty sense.

The air is hot and steamy. The flies are troublesome, and the fan must be constantly wagged to keep them away.

From the low and heavy wooden doors emerge Arab women. All are in white. The white veil, spanning just over the nose, falls and hides the lower part of the face. Only the eyes can you see—large lustrous, languorous. The long eyelashes are pencil-touched with kohl; paint has given the eyebrows the arch of young moons. A woman draped in white, veiled, with a pair of black, limpid, love-soaked eyes, peering at you—well, you know why the amorous young Arabian, lolling in the calm of a velvety night, sings with a plaintive heart to mysterious eyes which electrify the warm blood in his veins when the quick and understood glance has flashed upon him in the buzz of a bazaar.

The Arab women slither along in heelless shoes. Sometimes a hand is lifted to rearrange the *haik*. You see fingers girt with gaudy and barbaric jewellery, and the finger-nails are tinted, as with the stain of cigarettes, with henna-dye. A woman moves the lower part of her veil or *adjar* and shows a *rlila*, a gauzy jacket of pink, and pendant of golden twenty-franc pieces. Very old women, crooked and hobbling, and wizened and pale-faced, and yet with bright eyes lightening the wrinkled alabaster skin, do not wear the *adjar*. They are too old to set aflame the passions.

Young girls—I heard one called Ourieda (“Rose”)

and another Guelbi ("Heart of Mine")—with the sun-brown of Italy on them, playful and elfish, run about, and you see the laughter on their lips. When Nature turns them from girls to women, though they be but twelve years of age, no longer must they play with the little Arab boys. They wear the veil. They will be given in marriage to men twice, maybe three times, their age. They are the servants, the slaves of their husbands. Women have no souls, according to the Moslem faith.

There is a shout, and four Arabs come hastening down the Bab-a-Zoun, two in front, two behind, bearing poles, and on the poles is a box. I look into the box, and there among a mass of jasmine lies the waxen figure of a dead little Arab girl being hurried to burial, *sans* ceremony, except that at the moment of lowering into the grave the shroud is raised, and a white dove, symbol of the white, innocent life, flies away into the free sky.

With the heat of the day the clamour grows. Up near the old fort, the real Kasbah, there is a market. Eternal shrill squabbling. Twice the value is asked, half the value is offered. By the beard of the Prophet, the merchant cannot take less; by the beard of the Prophet the purchaser cannot give more. But the beard of the Prophet is ignored, for at last the baggy white trousers of the Arab change ownership. The new owner puts them on at once. In a corner a barber is shaving the heads of good Mohammedans. Near by a man with a headache is having a couple of leeches applied to the nape of the neck.

Up the sun-baked and dusty road is the heavy-walled fortress. Zouaves, with tasselled fezzes and

short blue vests and brilliantly red trousers and long white gaiters, are promenading. It is eighty years now since the French took Algiers. Up there, in that tile-encrusted tower, with the loftily perched window, with the bars before, was the audience chamber of the Deys. See those heavy chains, hanging like sullen festoons above the archway leading into the citadel! It was something of a democracy in the old times of the Deys; but democracy with a leer about it. The poorest Arab had a right of appeal to the Dey. But before being granted audience he must jump and grasp those chains. Catch them and he got audience; miss them, and sabres clove the life out of him. If the Dey was amiable, the chains were lowered and the jump was easy. If the suppliant was in disgrace, high were the chains raised—a jump, a miss, and then the stones splashed with blood. Romantic days of long ago!

I have been reading a book about what happened to the slaves, and in the hush of the warm morning I sit by the silent Dey's palace, but can hear the murmur of trade in the Kasbah, and watch the merchants' ships trailing through the blue waters of the bay into the Mediterranean. I play the boy who has been immersed in a thrilling yarn, and I can see the pirate craft, hull down, sails heavy, slowly gliding into Algiers harbour with their human booty—captives of every nation in Europe. Were there not thirty thousand of such slaves in Algiers at one time? Down on the quays the wretches had to declare what their rank was, duke's son or cook's son—if it was thought they were lying, a swipe of the bastinado was supposed to bring the truth out

of them. Look at the procession of them whipped up the Mount of the Kasbah to huddle in front of the Palace! Then out came the Dey—I am sure he was corpulent and bearded and pock-marked, and showed an infamous grin—and he went round and selected one-eighth of the catch as his portion. They were Government prisoners, and wore an iron ring on one ankle. The others, prizes of masters and crew, were sold by auction. It is not difficult this warm morning to let imagination roam—after reading that tome last night—and see the sad-faced slaves labouring under heavy chains. The Government or *beylik* slaves could exercise their own religion, and they had a day off on Friday, the Islamic Sunday. And the private slaves—hated because of their Christianity, and bullied because they were slaves—what of them? There was a young Christian who killed his master under provocation. With four nails he was crucified against a wall. A red-hot iron was pushed through his cheek to prevent him speaking, and he was slowly done to death with fire-brands.

And the Christian women captives—well, one had better not think about them this morning.

Do you know the story of the fan? In the time when Queen Victoria came to the throne, France was represented at Algiers by a Resident. The Dey had been squeezing money out of a Jew, and the Jew was a French citizen. The Resident went and drank coffee with the Dey, and wanted justice and reparation on behalf of his countryman. “Oh! he is only a Jew,” said the Dey. The man from France spoke warmly. It was a warm afternoon, and the Dey

was fanning himself. The Resident grew angry, and the Dey in wrath hit him with the fan. "Not me, but France you have insulted," said the Resident. The Dey retorted what he thought of France. In time French warships crossed the Mediterranean. There was the thunder of guns. Algiers capitulated, and a beautiful slice of North Africa passed under Gallic rule.

Note one thing as you wander, wonder-eyed, among the picturesque people in the Kasbah; no Arab is eating, nor drinking, nor smoking. This is the fast of Ramadan. For the length of one moon—from the time the moon is the thinnest crescent of silver in the blue-green of the evening till the moon wanes and the crescent is rubbed from the face of the sky—nothing passes the lips of good Mussulmans during sun-up. It is in remembrance of the time when Mohammed was in the wilderness and came to know Allah.

The average Moslem is a better Moslem than the average Christian is a Christian. There are hundreds of thousands of Christians who ignore the orthodox observances of their faith.

The Moslem is always strict. Be he labouring coolie or pasha, he breaks his fast at four o'clock in the morning. From the moment, in the cool grey of the coming day, he can distinguish a black thread from a white thread he obeys the laws of Ramadan. Be his work never so arduous, be the day scorching and he like to faint, not a drop of water to assuage his thirst and not a crust to stay his hunger must pass his lips. But as sunset nears the Mohammedan prepares to break his fast. When the sun dips and

the light reddens, the French Government fire a gun. The Mohammedan may eat. But first he smokes a cigarette; then he gorges; then he idles an hour at an Arabic café.

The mosques, with massive simplicity of architecture, white and heavily domed and with graceful minarets, are well-filled during Ramadan. Worthy old Arabs, to whom the fast is agony, come here to pray and to sleep. There are no pews, and the floors are covered with carpets, some rare and good, but most showy and modern. The Arabs lie by the pillars and snore, and at times wake and stand up and pray, and kneel and pray, and prostrate themselves before Allah, whilst the face is turned to Mecca the Holy.

Dog of a Christian though I am, I love the dignity of a mosque. I cover my dirty boots with red slippers, so I inflict no foulness on a religious house. The Christian removes his hat on entering a church; the Moslem takes off his shoes on entering a mosque.

Though the heat pant outside, and though, in the crooked alleys, the shrieking and clamour never end, it is coolness and quietude in the mosque, save for the murmur of Arabs, with snowy streaks in their beard, reciting verses from the Koran. There is the old mosque of Sidi Abd-er-Rheman-el-Thalebi and the newer mosque, Djema-el-Kebir, where also is an Arab court of justice. Disputing Mussulmans submit their cases to men learned in the law of the sacred Koran. There is the mosque of Djema-el-Djedid, erected centuries ago by a Genoese; but he built it in the form of a Greek cross, and when the Day saw this he cut off his head.

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Night has come and the moon swings like an electric globe over the rippled waters of the Bay of Algiers.

The lights dance in a thousand windows of the white town—but only dainty, dim points in the windows of the Arab houses. No women in the streets now. They, like ghosts, have flitted away.

But the Mohammedan men, having feasted, are out in the Bab-el-Oued, thronging their favourite cafés; they squat on small stools, and loll on mats by the wall-side in the streets. They sip sweet tea; they suck at water-pipes. A noisy rascal of a lad is running about with a pan of charcoal giving new light to the smokers. The lamps seem to accentuate the shadows in the recesses of Moorish doorways.

Curious, mysterious, Oriental is the scene. The loose, white drapery, the voluminous and sagging *seroual*, or trousers, the calm eyes and the passive features, the distant mournful song of a lover, the croak of a blind beggar, the wistful lights—well, it is an experience to sit in the group and listen to the throaty Arabic talk, and see a young Arab man greet his father with a kiss on the brow, and the father answer the salute with a kiss on the young man's elbow. Two men are toying with a happy, tame little lamb which has a ribbon about its throat. It will be sacrificed when Ramadan is over.

By nine o'clock the mob of café-haunters thins. There must be sleep and another meal before the sun rises, and then complete abstinence for fourteen hours.

European Algiers has been keeping no Ramadan.

Let us to the Place du Gouvernement, and, amid the flare of a little bit of transferred Paris, push through Frenchmen and Arabs and Spaniards and Italians and Maltese and Jews, who love Algiers because tobacco is cheap and the sun shines for nothing.

There is mirth, and there are oaths by Allah, by Santa Madonna, and by Christo.

The trees whisper with the soft breeze from the sea. It is cool, and European Algiers—which is not given to much religion—is out of doors. The little round, marble-topped tables are laden with absinthe and pretty syrups and ices and beer. The men, in coloured shirts and straw hats, play with cigarettes. The women, so quickly refined to beauty in the fragrant clime of Algeria, are in soft dresses and are full of gaiety. At one café a band is crashing waltz music. At another is an open-air cinematograph show. I catch glimpses of snow scenes in Russia. Electric cars scurry and clang. The bleat of the picture postcard seller is heard. There is the sing-song of the newspaper lad with French journals which have arrived from Marseilles to-day. A bit of the Parisian boulevards has been brought over to the North African coast.

But the Arab is standing on the house-top, praying for the fifth time to-day, for darkness now covers the earth: "Allah only is great; there is but one God, and Mohammed is his Prophet; Allah is great."



## CHAPTER VIII

### AN ARABIAN DAY ENTERTAINMENT\*

He and she—he an Englishman and she an American, and their relationship that of husband and wife. He was a county man at home, hunted a little, shot a little, golfed a little. She was an impressionable woman from the restless West.

She was a patriotic American, but she just loved Europe and its funny old ways.

They were both young and agreeable, and had plenty of money, and, like the people in the story-books, lived very happily. For two years after their marriage the impressionable little woman led her husband about Europe, and he, easy-going, was delighted to go where she wanted.

At first she thought London was the ideal spot. But London was too big, and she soon realised that endeavours to develop her individuality were not successful. Paris won her heart—she was prepared to live and die in Paris. That lasted for four long months. She was enraptured with Venice, and wanted to settle for ever and ever in one of the old palaces.

\* It is well to explain that this chapter is a composite picture, drawn from many persons, and is intended to show how the fascination of the Orient affects some people. No portrait is attempted, though certain features may be recognised by residents in Algiers.

J. F. F.

Later it was Rome which captivated her. But in time the monuments became "old stones." They moved on.

The usual fate brought them to Algiers, and, like so many others, they clapped their hands, and agreed it was the most divine spot on earth. The wistfulness of the East, its quietness, its glorious sunlight, its fantastic Oriental architecture, its mystery, the garb of the people, the seclusion of the women, the feeling that this was the land of romance, captivated the emotional young woman. She was in a rhapsody of enthusiasm. Her English husband was delighted; he said it "wasn't half bad."

She read Pierre Loti. She read novels which breathed the "atmosphere" of the East. She talked about Haroun-al-Raschid as though he had been a partner in her father's business at Pittsburg. She never wearied of wandering in the noisy Kasbah, and she gushed all the time. Her soul and her heart and her mind were really all one; and she was intoxicated. Algiers was all so bewildering, so like her girlish dreams when she read the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments." She told her husband she wanted to read Sir Richard Burton's unexpurgated edition. He thought she had better not. She did not see why not, as she was a married woman and an American girl, and she guessed she was as capable of understanding Sir Richard Burton as a good many men—so there! The Englishman refilled his pipe, and said he would see if a copy could be obtained. A copy never was obtained.

They had enjoyed one of their customary day's idling in the native quarter and buying carpets and

old candelabra which had once been in a mosque, and antique armour and wonderful carpets, and old silver and brass-work, and native jewellery "just too sweet for anything." They had been doing this kind of thing for a fortnight. The wife chose and the husband paid—and their rooms at the expensive hotel up at Mustapha Supérieur were littered with purchases. He was too amused, in a stolid way, at her enchantment to raise objection. Only once, when he barked his shins over some Andalusian armour, did he inquire, "What on earth do you think we are going to do with all this rubbish?"

It was after dinner, and they sat in long wicker chairs on the balcony of their hotel. The bay shone like enamelled silver beneath the moon, and the white houses of Algiers, with twinkling lights here and there, had a sort of ghostly, evanescent haziness about them. Somewhere was the cry of Arab music. The night was warm and sensuous, and the little woman bathed her whole being in enjoyment of it all.

"I'd like to live in Algiers," said she.

"Humph!" said he.

"Not, of course, in an hotel," said she.

"Well, where?" asked he.

"Well, I think it would be lovely to rent an Arab house—a real Arab house—and to furnish it with Arab things and to have Arab servants, and to have Arab food and sherbet, and—and—of course, there would have to be a fountain in the centre of the yard—it would be so Eastern to have a fountain trickling close by whilst I reclined upon a divan."

"Would it?" said he.

"Well, wouldn't it?" she asked.

Again he said, "Humph!"

She had her way. She always did have her way. In her little heart she boasted she knew how to manage her big English husband.

Once he began to move he moved steadily and purposefully. There were plenty of Arab houses, but it was not easy to find the house which fitted the Arab house which the young woman had pictured in her fanciful mind after heavy reading of light literature. Of course, it was to be all white—"a symphony in white" she called it—and it must have a Moorish doorway; she thought the Moorish arch so soothing. Then there must be a long passage; she did not mind it being dark and cool so that it opened—through another Moorish arch—right upon the courtyard, which was to be flooded with sunshine in the daytime and with moonlight at night. The pavement was to be of black and white squares of marble, and the fountain was to be of marble, though she would prefer alabaster, something that had once been in a pasha's harem. In the basin of the fountain, fish were to sport—she had read there were sacred fish in Algeria, and she would like her husband to get some of those. The pillars round the court ought to be alabaster, fluted if possible. The apartments were to be cool, and were to look over the bay. There were to be carved roofs, arabesque decorations and the windows were to be prettily latticed. Of course, there must be a marble bath—there was no fun living in an Arab house without a marble bath.

She made her husband understand she was a sensible and reasonable little woman; she only insisted on the essentials.

As luck would have it, there was not to be let at the time any Arab house that came anywhere near the specifications. He said they had better "chuck it." But she said that she liked Algiers and she was going to stay there, even though it was in the rôle of a grass widow. So they got a house. There was no Moorish doorway; it was inartistically square-cornered. But the place was white, almost a symphony in white—that is, it was mostly white except where the whitewash had rubbed off, and there were head-marks on the walls of one room. A pail of whitewash would put that right. The courtyard was red-brick; but the dear little accommodating woman said it was a pleasant contrast to the white. The pillars were neither marble nor alabaster; they were stucco, and they bulged aldermanically in the middle. The bath was—well, it was a cemented chamber, and did not smell over sweet.

"It is full of possibilities," said she, after viewing the house; "it can be made into a dream."

"You've noticed the sanitary arrangements are—er—primitive?" he said.

"Why" she asked, "will you spoil the poetry of it all by your practical, unimaginative remarks? Don't you really want us to spend a happy time living the life of the picturesque Arabs?"

"Oh, I'm game!" he declared.

So it was settled. She wrote long letters to her dearest friends in the United States, all about how

he and she were going to live the life of the real East, and she knew her dearest friends would be jaundiced with envy. Here is an extract from one of the letters :

“Such fun! But I’m just tired to death. We’re furnishing. We don’t have carpets; we have a lot of dear old stuffy rugs. And as the Arabs never have pictures, we have the walls hung with prayer-carpets—you know, the things the Mohammedans kneel on when they bump their heads in the direction of Mecca. And we’ve got such wonderful brass lanterns so that the light will be soft. We’ve made up our minds we are going to like the Arab food, and we are going to have Arab servants. Of course, we shall have to learn Arabic. And he, instead of smoking a nasty pipe, is to have a nice water pipe with a long tube—I’m going to buy that as a surprise for his birthday—and sometimes we are going to dress like Arabs. Oh! my dear, can you imagine me in great baggy red silk bloomers? And I’m going to learn one of their musical instruments, and won’t it be splendid on moonlight nights to sing Arabic love songs? He is not so fond of Arab music as I am sure I shall be. And we are making ever so many friends. There are very nice people here in the English colony, though the women do claw one another like cats, and because I’m American I’m very popular, and I’m going to give Arabic entertainments, and make everybody wish to be invited, and I may dress in Arabic style when I entertain, and it will be much nicer than a real Arab house, for we will have men and women to be bright. I ought to tell you that all the rooms open out on to a balcony; it’s a two-storied house, and so on the hot nights we will be able to sleep out and listen to the trickle of the fountain. There is something wrong with the fountain just now, but I guess it will be all right when it has been seen to. I shall study Mohammedanism and tell you all about it. It will be fine giving old civilisation a push-back and yielding oneself up to the loveliness of the purple East. We are going to live the simple life of

the Arabs. And I've got the most lovely set of cute coffee cups, and the loveliest spoons inset with coral. He has bought me two lovely gold brooches, just the same as the Arab women wear on the desert. I'm sure you must be just mad to come out here. You would find it so restful. Now I must rush off to buy some inlaid tables, all glistening with mother-of-pearl, and I have not a minute to call my own."

He and she were a great success in Algiers.

Others of the foreign colony had *bits* of Algeria about them. They had *nothing* but Algeria. She was gay, frolicsome, inventive, resourceful. There were people who smiled, and said their fondness for the native life was all affectation. She smiled back.

It was her delight to adorn herself in Arab garb, to deck herself with Arab jewellery, to put kohl on her eyes and henna on her fingers, and to entertain her friends with native cakes and curious dishes, and have sweet drinks in chased silver goblets and a silent-footed Arab servant to move round and pour rose-water over their fingers.

Once or twice, in private, she induced him to dress in Arab style; but he positively refused to appear like that before his friends. She said he looked noble; but he said he felt like an ass.

Her dinner-parties were much talked about. There were differences of opinion about the native food, but general agreement that it was an interesting experience. Once she sent out invitations to a party, and all the guests were to be in native costume. Unfortunately everybody had a prior engagement for that night.

Her great triumph was that, on two occasions, she had walked and ridden through the streets of

Algiers in native costume. She was so pleased that she had her photograph taken—though of her only a pair of eyes could be seen over the veil—and she sent copies to all the American friends whose addresses she could remember. Under this was her name in Arabic; but this was written by her teacher in the language.

The man said it was not a bad joke.

She revelled in the life. She read many books in French on native customs. One evening, as he and she were reclining on the house-top, she announced her belief in charms and omens and sand divination. Her retort to his criticism was that it was much more sensible than palmistry. The next day he had to roam the Kasbah till he bought her a charm that would keep off the evil eye. He did not know what the evil eye was, and he was sceptical about disaster if the evil eye got on; but she said she must have the charm. She got it.

Now he says it was the charm that did the mischief. He goes so far as to say that it had an objection to be worn by a *Roumi*. She says that is just all his silliness.

For about six weeks she was in a crescendo of delight. She was sure the Eastern life suited her nature, and she was surprised so few Europeans followed it.

Then things remained stationary for a fortnight.

After that came the diminuendo of enthusiasm. She didn't say anything; but he noticed that for a week she never donned the Arab dress. Her little bursts of glee were not so frequent, and the intervals were gradually extended.



"Say," she remarked one morning, "when you are down town you might try to get hold of some good English or American novels."

"What! have you read all those books about the charm of the East?"

"No, I've not read them all, but I've got a sort of idea I would like to read a good novel about home. This is a real beautiful life, but we ought not to forget home, ought we?"

"Certainly not!" said he. And he came home with an armful of Tauchnitz editions.

"Do you know you are getting stout?" he observed that afternoon. "I suppose it is the *kous-kous*."

"Heavens!" she exclaimed, "Do you think so? Of course, I've read that *kous-kous* is fattening. They give a lot of it to young girls to fatten them before they are married—how disgusting!"

"What do you say to us going along to the Hôtel St. George for dinner?" he asked casually.

"It would be splendid!" she cried. "They might reserve us a table. Will you—oh! I forgot you cannot telephone. What a nuisance it is not having the telephone in the house!"

"Hardly Eastern, you know," he remarked.

"What has that got to do with it? Why, I might be taken ill in the night, and you would be unable to get a doctor here because we had no telephone. You don't know what inconvenience I've been put to. Besides, because we are living Eastern, that is no reason why we should make ourselves uncomfortable."

"Oh, certainly not!"

He was silent for a time. Then he asked, "Do you happen to know where my pipes are?"

"I'll get you them," said she, jumping up. "Do you know I think a pipe suits you better than that hubble-bubble—it always makes a noise as though somebody needed to blow their nose. What dress shall I wear for dinner?"

"Oh! I should think that Paris one of cream and gold."

"You know you have got good taste," she laughed, and ran away. He scribbled a note to the hotel and hunted up a servant.

Well, naturally—being a discerning reader—you see the end of it. It was not that they disliked "the Easternness of it all," but habits got in front of Arab charm. So *he* wrote a letter to his brother in England:—

"We shall be back in time for a bit of shooting and I'd be glad if you'd give an eye to the place being in order for our return. We are coming back earlier than we intended, but the fact is we are a bit fed up with Algiers. Algiers is all right, but we went the pace a bit too strong. You know what the little woman is like—all nerves and impressionism. Don't you chaff her when we get back or I'll break your head. It was rather sporting at first living as Arab and Arabess in an Arab house, but it was like playing at theatricals all day long. I think she liked it at first, but I soon sickened. No smoking-room and no decent saddle-bag chair—nothing but a lot of beastly rugs and cushions to sprawl on. No wall-paper; white-wash covered with mats and panels with Arabic inscriptions which nobody could read. No decent table, but a lot of brown wood carved tables with bits of oyster shell stuck in them like almonds in toffee. Not a decent-sized English

coffee cup in the place, but a lot of little things similar to egg-cups with the bottom knocked off. No electric bells, so we had to shout for the native, and when he came you weren't able to tell him what you wanted. No electric light, nothing but glimmering Oriental lamps which only showed how little you could see. To please her, I occasionally put on Arab clothing, a burnous—that's a sort of Arab frock coat, but you feel you are spending the day in a bath-robe. The bath—what a lot of rot is written about Oriental baths; no hot tap, no cold tap even—the water had to be brought in pails and the hot water prepared in the kitchen. As for the sanitary arrangements—the County Council would be down on us at home if we had not something a hundred times better.

"We leave for Marseilles next Wednesday. I've had a dealer chap in this morning, and I've sold everything for just about a fifth what I gave. I'm told I'm jolly lucky to get that. If you know anybody who wants an Arab house, they can have this, rent free, for over eighteen months; we took this shop for two years. She's not bringing any of the Oriental rubbish home except a few trinkets. She is very popular with the colony, for she is giving presents to everybody. I thought at first I would have a little trouble in getting her away; she was so gone on Arab life. But she has had enough of it. She was saying this morning it does not fit in with her scheme of life, though I'm blessed if I know what that is. Her ambition now is to write a magazine article showing up all those writing johnnies who scribble books about the Orient. She says they exaggerate and put on the colour a bit too thick. She says these books make people want to travel when they would be much better at home. I'll wire you from Paris when to expect us."

## CHAPTER IX

### BY DILIGENCE TO THE SOUTH

THE French are direct descendants from the Romans as road-makers. The roads they have built in Algeria and Tunisia are the best roads out of Europe, and better than half of those in Europe. Messieurs, your roads are magnificent.

Civilisation, represented by many horse-power motor-cars, goes rushing in a cloud of dust towards the desert. But motor-cars are for the opulent. Nobody ever heard of an opulent author. So in Algeria, when I was not travelling by train—they have good trains in Algeria—or slouching over the sands with a camel caravan, I journeyed by diligence.

Now, the stage coaches which run in Algeria must have been shipped across the Mediterranean just about the time steam locomotion was introduced into France, and the coaches were forty years old then. None of your light, easy-sprung coaches in which you span passes in European tourist haunts—comparatively up to date notwithstanding their dusty cushions and rope-repaired harness—but big and broad like a barge, with a tremendous cave of a hood, which carries merchandise or passengers, and which is never full.

There are two things in this world in which, no matter how packed, there is always room for some-

thing else—a kit-bag and an Algerian stage-coach. I have seen the diligence crowded with poor Europeans and Arabs, one artist and one author, until there was nowhere to put your feet, and you were sure your cramped knees were aching towards bigness, growing bigger and bigger with pain until you feared they would never straighten, but swell to the size of knobs on willow-trees. Yet there was always room for six more Arabs.

With the courtesy due to foreigners, we were promised the best seats on the coach—two places behind the driver. But we must be ready at six-thirty in the morning. We were gratified. We were up at half-past five, and the untidy Frenchwoman at the inn got us coffee and we munched a couple of dry rolls and hulked our bags down the road.

There was the coach, a mighty red and yellow vehicle, like a relic of the seventeenth century, but its redness and its yellowness numbed by years of accumulated dust. The hind door had been opened and shut so often and joggled so much that it had grown careless, and would not shut like an ordinary door. The top part lurched forward, and so checked the other part getting into its place. But if you gave the door a hoist it would get into groove all right, though there was no carefulness about the fit. Once there had been a glass window—but that must have been a couple of generations ago! Perhaps once upon a time there had been windows at the side. None now. There were latticed wooden blinds to be raised to keep out the sun, though, when they were raised, bits of them protruded just like the windows in the decrepit four-wheel cabs of London, and you were in

constant trepidation lest they would rattle themselves into the roadway. Suggestive of an enormous bundle thrown on top, a bulging balloon of a hood was above, and made the diligence look top-heavy.

Well, there she stood in the roadway, and there silent Arabs squatted by the wall. There were no indications of the diligence starting. Nobody knew anything about when it would start. We sat on our portmanteaux, smoked cigarettes, and said it was nice to be in a land where time did not count.

In half an hour a podgy Frenchman with no collar appeared—and the gentleman who had promised us the best seats. Ah, messieurs were early! But when would the coach start? Immediately! Then we waited another half-hour. Five grey and scraggy horses appeared. Hurrah! But there was something wrong with the harness, and there was difficulty in finding the necessary twine to repair it. Three horses were attached to the coach and two were leaders. But one of the leaders had a loose shoe, and the scrubby-chinned driver said he could not go on. But the collarless Frenchman said it would be all right. They argued, with gesticulations, for ten minutes. The driver gesticulated the most, and he won. Another horse was brought. We hoisted our bags to the roof. We saw the inside of the coach stuffed with Arabs. We saw the hood also stuffed with Arabs until they could not move. Then it was stuffed again with sacks and boxes of merchandise. Then more Arabs climbed in. It was wonderful. It was marvellous as a conjuring trick. On the seat behind the driver was an hirsute old Frenchman, a gendarme, with all his belongings, and

the two foreigners. The hood came in a curve over us, so that if we wanted to see ahead it was necessary to bend forward until the chin got to the level of one's knees. The roof of the coach cut like a board across the small of the back ; still one could recline against the pack of Arabs. They did not protest or inquire where one was pushing ; they did not mind in the least.

A grimy letter-box was attached to the side of the diligence. The driver turned a handle and relieved a brake from the iron-shod wheels. He cracked his whip. We were off. Not at break-neck speed. The horses did not scamper, and the coach did not sway. The animals ambled and the coach creaked lumbrously, and our speed was something under four miles an hour.

Out upon the sun-burnt wilderness. The driver swore at his horses, but the horses did not understand his tongue. Anyway, they took no notice. The sinuous, chalky road curved and surged toward eternity. The heat of the day grew and the hot earth quivered. And we rumbled on. The Arabs under the hood curled themselves into balls and went to sleep. A trunk on an upper shelf fell upon the stomach of one of the sleepers with a thud ; but he was impervious to disturbance.

Mounted Arabs scampered by on restless steeds. Poor, thin peasants trotted by the side of diminutive donkeys laden with wood. A camel caravan was slowly wending its way over the desert. At intervals were the wide-stretching black tents of Arab encampments. The women turned their backs. The children ran forward with glee, and the dogs barked. And we rolled on and on.

I felt drowsy. But my neighbour, the gendarme, was busy. He had a hunk of bread, a garlic-flavoured sausage, and a bottle of red wine. Then he dozed also, leaning heavily against me. All the Arabs were in the land of Nod. Now and then the driver gripped the reins between his knees, twirled a cigarette between his fingers, lit it, puffed, cracked his whip, swore at his horses. But they kept an even pace. It was a sultry day.

Dark clouds were sailing across the sky, and when they got before the face of the sun the eyes felt relieved. At one point an Arab was doing rough ploughing with a couple of oxen and a crude wooden plough. It was slow work.

We overtook an Arab family on the move. The ladies were mounted on slim-legged camels, and they had a sort of huge beehive structure to shield them. But the curtains were thrown on one side. Veils had been removed, and though the women never looked our way a side-glance told they were pretty. Some had children, and others played with puppy-dogs. The servant women walked: short, stalwart, olive-coloured women in blue checked skirts. A flock of sheep was being driven along with the caravan, and black ribbons had been fastened by the women to the rams, which meant the bringing of good luck.

Rumble, rumble! We were crawling across the world—a mere speck of a diligence moving slowly over a land from which all nutriment had been scorched. My seat was uncomfortable, but I dozed, with fitful starts and sudden thoughts that I was being precipitated from some fearsome height.

A move round a hill, a groaning across a bridge



beneath which is a dry river-course, and we have reached an ugly village. Yonder is a factory. Hereabouts much alfa grass grows, capital stuff to be beaten into pulp for the manufacture of paper. The firm is French, but the workmen are either Italians or Spaniards. Catch Frenchmen living in a hole like this where there is no boulevard, no bands, no women ! But there is a shoddy inn. Our bones crack as we climb down amongst a horde of Arabs. A pasty-faced woman smiles on us. *Déjeuner ?* Certainly.

The room is almost dark—to keep the flies quiet. The table-covering is oilcloth, and the cutlery is the roughest. But the dame gives us good bread and a bottle of wine ; she puts a tin of sardines before us, presents a ragout, makes an omelette, and provides a dish of fresh figs. An excellent *déjeuner* for a village on the desert. Coffee ? Certainly, messieurs. Cognac ? Oui, messieurs.

But the flies—the scourge of flies—the millions of flies ! May the maledictions of all mankind be levelled against those flies ! Notwithstanding the dark room, the place was full of them. The waving of a hand in front of the face did not discourage them. When they could not attack elsewhere, they ripped bits off one's most delicate flesh through one's socks.

Fresh horses. Up we climbed to our seats again. The diligence creaked. But it rolled on. It was mid-day, and the air was dry. The country was a piece of the world's rubbish-heap—sand and stones, stones and sand, and the pale white road stretching endlessly through it all. A sleepiness rested upon everything.

Of course, I drowsed. The sweltering heat, the early rising, the luncheon, the coffee and cognac—of course I dozed. And when I awoke, how my bones ached! With what difficulty I stretched my limbs! When would we reach the halting-place?

A black mark on the horizon—like a resting goat. Trees! An oasis was in sight. My eyes strained towards them. But the horses, laggard beasts, had no enthusiasm. Three miles an hour they went. I caught a side glimpse of a horse. Its eye was closed, and I verily believe it was sleeping as it ran.

Here was the little town of mud houses. The streamlets were trained through gardens, and the gardens blossomed beautifully. The red pomegranates were everywhere. An avenue of trees. Whip, hurry crack! The driver would have liked to have arrived in style. The horses were morose. A little market-place, thronged with Arabs and mostly selling sheep. And most of the women going about uncovered. And a little French hotel—with cool drink to be obtained.

Far were we from the busy world. And, as we sipped our absinthe, we watched the easy-going Orient. Here also, far south, as everywhere, the traders were the Jews. Stout Jewesses sat in front of their houses. They were gorgeously attired in flowered frocks and velvet jackets, and their hair and their ears and their necks and their wrists were heavy with golden ornaments.

A walk in the evening. The mosques were the same as millions of other mosques. We strolled

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across a Moslem graveyard. The graves were shallow, the coffin lids had been broken, many skeletons were to be seen. But there was a tomb of a *marabout*, mud-built, and from all parts of the *kouba* stuck spikes—like almond points in a tipsy-cake. We crawled in by the low door, and beyond the screen saw a bundle where we knew rested the saint. Bits of rag were tied to the screen. When anyone ails, it is customary to bring a shred of clothing and fasten it to the screen. That means the saint will do something to appease the suffering. Outside we asked an old Arab what was the name of the *marabout*. He did not know, but he was a holy man who lived a long time ago.

Away south, where the night is as balmy as the day. We dawdled the hours after dinner, and watched a young French officer, gradually getting drunk, making love to the Frenchwoman behind the bar. Night came on, and the little town sank to sleep, except at the French hotel, where the poor Europeans drank and smoked and played cards. The moon hung like a great electric globe in the heavens.

Another diligence was starting at midnight for a ten-hours' journey still farther south.

The oil lamps attached to the coach were yellow and sickly and mean. We stood about waiting for the diligence to get away. A chill came into the air and we shivered. For our clothing was light; our baggage was scant; we had no overcoats with us. But we paid a little extra, and that entitled us to travel in the *coupé*, a tiny panel of a place at the

front of the coach under the driver. The handle had gone from one of the doors, so that it had not been opened for years. The seat was hard ; the place was all apertures. There was straw on the floor ; the windows, opaque with filth, rattled and refused to remain up.

The pair of us felt cold, shiveringly cold, as we crouched in our box, and the old diligence went on its way. In the dark we rummaged in our baggage for a candle. With the haft of a penknife we stuffed our pyjamas into the aforementioned apertures. They worked loose, and the first intimation we got was our pyjamas flaunting full like undergarments on a clothes-line. However, we made the stuffing effective. We smoked. With the rough ceremony of tramps, we ate bread and potted meat and munched chocolate, and drank from a bottle and smoked—chiefly we smoked. We tried to sleep, but we were already sore, and the jolting made us more sore. We did not say we wished we had not come, but we regretted we were not wealthy and could have travelled by automobile. We soothed ourselves by saying that, after all, this was a much more interesting way of travelling than dashing along in a motor-car seeing precious little.

We lowered one of the windows—merely to provide a change. The wind was blowing, and our candle, stuck in a wedge of the window, began to spray grease. I blew it out.

What moonlight ! The world was bathed in moonlight. The desert was silvered with moonlight.

The yellow lamps flickered. The crunch of the

slow-revolving wheels and the steady rap of the horses' hoofs on the metallic road appeared only to direct attention to the all-pervading silence. And mounted, armed Arabs were trotting on the desert on either side of the road. We were carrying the mails, and there might be robbers about. Those Arabs, wrapped in their white burnouses and with gleaming rifles on their shoulders, were uncanny—so quiet were they as their horses ran over the yielding sand.

A flame on the desert—and we rattled past a camel caravan resting for the night. The flare illumined the dark countenances of the cameleers.

Morning came with a green and a pink glow. When the sun peeped over the world it sent the shadow of the diligence stretching across the desert to the length of the Eiffel Tower. A bleached, sad, sunshiny land. The bones of animals which had fallen by the way were often seen. And the horses kept their even pace.

A square hovel and a yard where the horses were changed. A blear-eyed man was in charge, and we inquired if he could make us coffee. No, he could not. Europeans seldom came that way, and it was not worth while to make it for the Arabs who passed.

Worn with headache, we climbed up under the hood of the diligence. There was more air there than in the *coupé*. As the day grew, the freshness of the new day withered. The horses crawled.

Ah, yonder was our destination! We knew the oasis by the dark spot of foliage. There we would wash and eat and lie down and sleep.

How slow were the horses ! Three miles—possibly not much more than two miles—an hour. They were sorry scrags for that last stage. From the time we saw the oasis till we reached it was three hours. The sun was high and the heat surged in waves, and the desert all around breathed like a furnace.

## CHAPTER X

### THE END OF RAMADAN

THE breath of the hot day, the warm sigh of the sand, is still in the air.

Night is coming quickly over the desert, as though Allah were drawing a thin veil over the loved world. The sun has gone, with the dignity of the desert as its grave, and a strange white light stretches over the place where the flame lowered. Maybe it was once a blue light, long ago—ten minutes, perhaps—but now it is silvery white, with no haze. Above, the sky is deep blue velvet, and yonder, eastward, like the press of a large finger-nail in the blue, is the ring of the new moon.

Very thin, like a half-loop to enclasp a woman's neck, the little ring of the moon hangs from heaven. The children of Mohammed all the world over are looking at that little loop of the moon. They have waited for it so patiently, so long, but with firm faith in the goodness of Allah.

When the last moon was born they began the fast of Ramadan. From sun-heave to sun-dip no food touched their lips, no sip of water touched their tongue. So commanded the Prophet, to teach abstinence, hunger-bearing; to nurture self-control by fasting through the scorching hours with no complaining, but with prayers of thankfulness to the

Most Merciful One. That moon waxed and waned and went.

Now the sight of the new moon tells that Ramadan is closed.

Though night comes, the air is warm and sensuous. Still is everything save the hurry of the brook, and the splash of water over the stones; and the little gurgles of the eddies—as though elves were laughing, but subdued in their joy, not wanting to be heard—seem to be saying, “Did you ever know the world so still as it is to-night?”

I walk through the lanes of Old Biskra. They are crooked, and all the walls are high and of sun-baked bricks. Some Arab maidens, too young to need the veil to hide them from men’s eyes, have been drawing water from the brook, and stand in the gloom of a date-palm. There are many palm-trees, not straight but willowy, and over the high dun walls they gracefully lean. No sun, no moon, and yet in the mysterious, clear, half-light shadows seem to fall.

There are long, uncertain lanes. Low, broad doors indicate entrances to Arab houses. They are all closed. There are no windows, no bird chirps, nor is there the song of a frog. The palms are as still as though their spreading fronds were stencilled against the sky. No one is about. Old Biskra, on the edge of the Algerian desert, is like a forsaken city, a city stricken dead—only the husk of a city. Is that a little shiver I feel, this warm, calm even-tide?

Listen!

Shrill, but far away, you can hear it, melancholy but melodious. Only through the clear dry air of



Africa does the voice carry like that. It is the sound of the *muezzan*. It is the fourth prayer of the day, the *aseur*—so clear, so low, so far away. It is beautiful. It is sad. But the fast of Ramadan is finished and millions of Mohammedans are happy to-night.

In the swift enfolding dusk—the mud of the walls, the green of the trees, the grey-white of the sky commingling—there is a sudden splash of crimson—bright, dazzling crimson. There is something pellucid in the coming night, so clear is that crimson, so distinct is the Arab woman on the flat house-top, with her *haik* away, standing there in crimson jacket and spreading crimson pantaloons.

Her skin is soft brown. I can see it. Her hair has the glossy blackness of a raven. Big amber beads encircle her neck. There are gold ornaments to her ears and gold bangles are on her wrists.

So she stands, silently looking over the great silent world—this Arab woman in crimson. Has she ever seen the world—known anything of it but the burnt desert and the burnt hills and the oasis of the date-palms? She hears my tread. She turns and is alarmed. She is an Arab woman, and her face has been seen by a man. Shame, shame! She runs and is gone.

How quickly the night closes in! How peaceful, soul-soothing it is to walk these silent lanes of Old Biskra at the end of Ramadan. What feasting, what laughter, what joy in the Moslem houses behind these solemn brown walls! But outside all so silent.

Passing a little shadowed break in the wall, I start. It is only an Arab saying his prayers. He is

kneeling on his rough mat, and his hands are uplifted. He takes no heed—nor do I trespass upon him with more than a sidelong glance. But I think there is something exquisite in a faith whose devotees go into the open, bare-footed and humble, and give thanks for the goodness of the day.

Now the white has gone from the west, and all the sky is hooded with velvet. And the rim of the moon shines like the glint in the whirl of a sabre. And to the north beyond El Kantara, the gate to the desert, lightning is playing amongst the hills; flash here, flash there, a mighty glow and then a quivering dance of light.

So back to Biskra the new—Biskra the town of the vulgar and the lewd.

At the dawn comes the prayer of the Faithful, *el fejur*: "*In the name of the all merciful God, we seek refuge with the Lord of the day against the sinfulness of beings created by Him, against all evil and against the night lest they overtake us suddenly.*"

Day is broken, and the prayer of the Prophet greets the morning. It has been greeting the morning in the circling of the world ever since the grey of the new day rose out of the Pacific. It has journeyed across India, across Arabia, will traverse the width of Africa, and the last cry will mingle with the roar of the Atlantic beyond Morocco.

What is all this stir? Why are the Arabs all in spotless white and new shoes, and why do they look so fresh, and why is there such sparkle in their eyes? Ramadan is over.

No more gnawing hunger and maddening thirst

through the long day, from four in the morning to near seven o'clock at night. Now can they feast and make merry. The sheep has been killed and the smell of cooking is in the air. How happy everybody is. Smiles dance on the lips as friend meets friend; hands touch, and then each man raises his own hand to his lips to kiss it—the hand honoured by the touch of his friend. Honour is done to old men by an arm held encircling their necks; under pressure they are kissed on the forehead, whilst they return the salute by a kiss on the elbow of their friend.

The morning comes fresh and radiant, and the whole earth laughs with joy. All the Arabs are in their whitest, newest clothes. The shrouded women—well, their white wrappings show creases, and the creases advertise that the white coverings are new this morning. The little children, boys and girls, noisy and frolicsome, like all children the world over, are in grandest attire, blues and mauves, reds and yellows, chiefly yellows—and yet in the glow of the new day softer tones would have been out of place.

It is nice to see the children. The Prophet loved children. Often when he prayed he held a child in his arms. Only when he made prostration on the ground did he put the child away. But even then, in the moment of heart's abasement, his little grandchildren, the little ones of his beloved daughter Fatma, climbed upon his back in play, and he never removed or rebuked them. All the great souls of the earth have loved little children.

Out on the yellow desert beyond Old Biskra, thousands of white-clad Arabs have gathered for the

Great Prayer. They are seated upon the ground, facing the east, which blushes with glory—a tender, solemn glory. Each Moslem has placed his slippers aside, for Allah must be thanked with meekness. And that also explains why the Arabs have put aside their gorgeous raiment and come in white only—long curves of white-cowled men, except a few from the desert, and they have bands of camel-hair encircling the head. But away in the background, towards where the palm-trees rear, is a group of devout women, shrouded, and behind them are their negress servants with faces ebon-black, and their clothing as red as the cheeks of ripe pomegranates.

Here comes the Imam, the wise elder, a thin old man bent with years. The colour of his drawn skin is that of alabaster. His eyes are grey, full of the kindness which comes with old age, and his beard has thinned to a straggling grey tuft. He is the honoured old man of Biskra, rich but living humbly, generous to the poor. Says Mohammed, "Prayer carries us half-way to Allah ; fasting brings us to the door of his palace ; alms gains us admission." And because he is the loved old man of Biskra, he, on this most precious morning, leads the Moslems in prayer.

A little in front of the great throng he stands. He stands alone on a piece of rich carpet, leaning on a stick, and his face is toward Mecca. The throng of worshippers arise, long rows of silent men, bare-footed, their keen olive faces half-wrapped in white. A great silence falls. But the sun shines bright from the pale blue sky, and there is the freshness of maiden-

hood in the morning air. Beautiful, entrancing, dignified, that is the scene.

On the stillness rises the voice of the Imam, with the tilt of husky falsetto that comes into the voice of age. It is almost shrill :—

“ *La Ilaha illa 'llahu !* ”

And the mighty throng of worshippers, standing erect and with eyes gleaming across the desert, repeat the cry ; with no raised voice, but subdued—deep, rich, Gregorian, like the rumble of many tongues in a Christian cathedral during prayer. It is the profession of faith : “ *La Ilaha illa 'llahu !* —There is no God but one God.”

The Imam, palsied with his fourscore years, leads the host in the prayers. But his voice weakens. And the voices of the congregation gather in sonority. Each prayer sounds like the low thunder of waves breaking in a distant cave :

“ With my face towards Mecca, and with a sincere heart, I offer two prayers to Allah.” All arms hang loose, all bodies are straight, all features solemn.

Still standing, every man raises his hands to his face ; his thumbs touch each ear, and his palms are outward. “ Allah is great ! ” It is simple, but it is grand. Still standing, the right hand rests over the left hand on the chest. Then comes the cry : “ Holiness to Thee, O Lord. Praise be to Thee. Great is Thy Name.” Still standing, but the body inclined forward, the hands resting on the knees and fingers extended, the head is bent and a lower note sounds : “ I extol the sanctity of Allah ! ” Now on his knees rests every Moslem. “ The Lord is Great ! ” And all bodies sway forward, and all

brows touch the earth. Not a whisper, not the rustle of a garment. It is God's earth, and there is no brushing aside of small stones. A long pause. Then the Imam's voice, shaking like one in grief, and the chant welling and swelling up behind him: "I extol the greatness of the Lord, the most High." That is the first prayer.

No one removes the grains of sand clinging to the forehead. For when the Moslem, whose evil deeds may have outweighed his good deeds, suffers the torments of Purgatory before the All-Charitable forgives and takes him to Paradise, the fires will not torment the forehead which has been prostrated.

With the forefinger of the right hand raised, the voices sound: "I affirm there is no God but one God, that Mohammed is his Prophet." Next comes the recitation of passages from the Koran. That is the second prayer.

Do you see the picture? can you feel the noble poetry of it all?—the desert, ending only where the heavens come down to earth, the paling blue of the sky, the day ripening into warmth, and thousands of white-robed Arabs, barefooted and with deep-chested voices, strong but lowered, giving thanks to God.

The prayer is over. There is a rush towards the Imam. The grace of Allah is upon him. To kiss him upon the shoulder, to kiss the edge of his raiment—nay even to kiss those who have touched his raiment—that is merit. Yes, but a giant of a negro, a red fez accentuating the jet of his skin, drives back the over-eager worshippers. The old man is slowly and with difficulty conducted to a stone pulpit. With

pain he mounts the steps. He is to preach, and everybody crowds round close and squats on the ground. Mohammed said that private prayers could be as long as individuals liked, but that sermons should be short. The Prophet, even in his day, understood that long sermons did not necessarily assist the mind towards devotion.

So the sermon is short, and it is read. The voice of the old man, now very weary, does not carry well. On the outskirts of the congregation, the children are playing and chasing each other. Soon the sermon is over. Then one more prayer of supplication—"the marrow of worship"—hands lightly bent towards the body, and faces upraised and looking right into the eye of the sun, and Allah is beseeched to be gracious through the coming year, to keep away sickness, to cause good crops to grow.

It is over. But as the worshippers came from their homes one way they must return by another route.

A blaze of friendship! What happiness! What placing of hands upon shoulders! Friend looks joyously into the eyes of friend and kisses him on both cheeks.

The desert grows hot under the breath of its mother, the sun. The blue has been burnt out of the sky, which is like a roof of steel. And are those little brush-marks in the sky clouds? Surely not clouds, but only the sky, in its great quietude, dreaming of clouds.

Revelry, feasting, the spirit of good comradeship. That is the end of Ramadan. No abstinence now,



ALLAH IS GREAT! THERE IS NO GOD BUT ALLAH!

*Photograph by J Foster Fraser*





out gorging. The white robes are put away, and everyone dresses in his best. A lamb is killed and comrades come to eat. The children are driven round Biskra in caparisoned carts, and they shout and yell, and are gloriously happy. The Moslem women have their friends, and show their finery and munch sweetmeats. In the afternoon they go to the cemetery and put sacred seeds into little glasses. And the birds come and peck, and fly away with the seeds, which are counted as prayers, right to the gates of Paradise.

## CHAPTER XI

### BISKRA THE SPOILT

BISKRA is the magnet which draws many people to Algeria. It can be reached without discomfort by railway, unless you are a grumbler, and then you will declare the journey is uncomfortable. It is on the edge of the desert, and when you look south there is nothing but a shimmering sea of sand.

Years ago Biskra must have been redolent of the Orient. It is picturesquely ensconced in an oasis. It was the first town reached by cavavans coming up from the desert, and it provided peace and shade and entertainment. It was truly Arabic.

Then the French built a railway, so that it was easily reached. Then doctors discovered the air was so dry it was just the place for invalids. Then Mr. Hichens wrote his novel, "The Garden of Allah"—and that did the mischief. The hotel-keepers and tradesmen of Biskra ought to erect a golden statue to Mr. Hichens, or give him an annuity of twenty thousand francs a year. He is the maker of Biskra to-day, and has brought much gold to the town. But I wish "The Garden of Allah" had never been written.

For Biskra is spoilt—irrevocably spoilt. It has become the shrine of the galloping tourist, here to-day and gone the day after to-morrow. The East

is overlaid with the West. Instead of a natural town it is a fake Eastern town. The picture of the Orient, as seen in Biskra, is as much like the real thing as the Paris seen by the scurrying Cockney week-enders is like the real Paris.

Great European hotels have been reared, and in some of them the waiters are imported from Switzerland. There is a casino and a race-course. There are promenade gardens where a French military band plays in the evening. The train delivers a swarm of noisy, guzzling German tourists, and they crowd the Café Glacier and drink enormous quantities of lager beer. Telegraph boys spin past on bicycles. The screech of the gramophone is heard. Half the shops deal in photographs. The place seems to have been pelted with an avalanche of picture-postcards.

Touts—alleged guides—make life unbearable. All the young lads and young men of Biskra, instead of earning a decent livelihood, seem to spend their time touting amongst the visitors; and they are the most persistent and impudent of blackguards. Their chief occupation is to conduct sightseers to doubtful places of amusement after dinner. Tourists make friends with these touts, and the touts make money out of the tourists. Plenty of people go to Biskra for their health's sake, and imagine they are going to see the real East. But Biskra is rapidly becoming a caravanserai of licentiousness.

Everybody goes to the Street of the Ouled Nails, the professional courtesans. It is a naughty experience, and quite nice ladies saunter through the sordid lanes, and sip coffee in the dancing-saloons where the attraction is the indecent posturing of fat females—

and they excuse themselves for going because it is the custom of the country, and they are witnessing a phase of life prohibited elsewhere. As a matter of fact, there are not half a dozen real Ouled Naïls in the street—most of the girls are tricked-out strumpets from Algiers and Constantine. They are brought to Biskra for the amusement of Europeans and Americans.

The air of Biskra is the thing, bracing, but windy and impregnated with much sand. The morning is cool and refreshing; mid-day is sultry; there is a distinct chill at sundown. It is a good climate for rheumatism. The water is charged with magnesia, and neurotics and dyspeptics do well. But folk who suffer from insomnia or melancholia—notwithstanding the balls and junketings, and the endeavours to make it an imitation Cairo—had better keep away. Indeed, though Biskra was first boomed because of its health qualities, very little attention is paid to the needs of invalids. The tourist, jaunting for pleasure, is the first and main consideration.

Whatever real enjoyment the traveller gets out of Biskra is by neglecting the entertainments which are arranged for him, leaving people of his own country alone, spending his time amongst the natives.

Morality, it is said, is largely a question of climate. And morality is not a characteristic of Biskra; but jealousy is. If a wife looks out of a window, her husband buys one of the pistols made in the town and uses it—on her. The women of Biskra have the reputation of caring no more for their lovers than for their lawful husbands.

The Arab puts the handkerchief to every con-

ceivable purpose except that for which we use it. In his long and flowing white burnous, he is a fine-looking fellow. But I doubt if he were put in a lounge suit and a felt hat whether he would be quite so noble-looking.

That he lies, is simply to say that he is an Eastern. He is particularly suspicious when he has to deal with a French official. He lies in self-defence and to injure his enemies. Even where there is no object in deceit he still lies, because lies are less compromising than the truth. He lies to confuse the foreigner; he lies for the sheer love of lying. Many of his conclusions have no other foundation than intuition. Life on the ever-shifting desert seems to have interfered with his coherence of action.

In one quarter of Biskra live the negroes. One night I wandered into a courtyard lighted by nothing but moonshine and the gleam of a fire where *kous-kous* was being prepared by the women. The black men—some twenty of them—were crouching by the wall watching the cooking. When I entered, the women, who had their *haïks* thrown over their shoulders, hurriedly covered their faces. One of the negresses produced a green flag and stuck it in the centre of the yard. Then musicians made a circle and began banging forth music, which consisted chiefly of the clash of cymbals. The men jumped up and began, jerkingly, to whirl round the yard. Faster and faster they went. Tambourines were shaken and guitars twanged. Suddenly every man seized a stick, gyrated swiftly, and gave a whack with his stick upon the stick of his neighbour—rather like men fencing with the single-stick.

Whirl, whirl, they spun, and at the same time danced round the fire. They kept this going until the signal was given that the *kous-kous* was ready. The sticks were cast on one side. With jabbering the men clustered round the platters of food, and gulped handfuls of it as though they had not eaten for days. This was the "feast of the sacred wood"—a weird scene.

Visitors hustle to the tomb of Sidi Okba, the Moslem conqueror of North Africa. But who goes to Tolga ?

Tolga is an oasis, a four hours' horse-ride from Biskra, across a white and forbidding plain. A French duke, bored with Biskra, came here some years ago, and was fascinated with the village. There was a tiny hotel. There he settled. He was rich and he made Tolga the fashion. The herd of tourists went to Biskra, but people who wanted to do the correct thing flocked to Tolga. This tiny collection of white huts beneath the tall palms was blessed with a shower of gold. At once the building of a large hotel was begun. Then the duke went away. All who had come in his wake went also. The next season Tolga seemed to be forgotten.

So when I went there I found the gates of the big hotel closed. Not a soul to be seen in the sun-splashed streets. But across the way was the little hotel. Deserted, too ? Not quite. I clattered in the courtyard, and then out came a large, full-whiskered, expansive Frenchman. A delightful man. Bedrooms ; they would be prepared for my friend and myself at once. He clapped his hands ; a native

servant appeared. Buckets of water were to be provided so that we could sponge down. We wanted drink. He had no wine—but he would secure some—but he had a bottle of absinthe. A good stiff glass of absinthe which brought cheeriness to the heart and made the tongue fluent. We sat in the cool, colour-washed eating-room and sipped absinthe.

Visitors to Tolga? Oh, few—few! But the landlord liked Tolga, and he lived there for choice. If visitors did not come it did not matter; if they did come he was pleased, and his charges were moderate.

He got a basket and went forth to seek food. And he unearthed two bottles of wine. And the dinner was good—soup, a little mutton, a chicken, and fruit; many dates of amber hue, Tolga dates, sweet and as soft as butter in the mouth. There are no dates in the world like Tolga dates.

The tall and bearded Frenchman cooked the dinner for us, and his smiling little daughter served it. Then we sat down and smoked, and talked about date culture. Then we climbed to our bedrooms, opening upon a balcony, and prepared for sleep with only the moon as lantern.

Wonderful are these oases. A bubble of underground streams in the desert, and there springs forth luxuriant vegetation. The barrenest stretch of desert blossoms fruitful if only it has water. It is this which gives many Frenchmen the dream that by irrigation the desert may be made fertile and prosper as it did in the time of the Romans—and traces of their irrigation works may be discovered at the present day.



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The oases owe their existence to the natural springs. The date-palm, the tree of the oasis, needs plenty of heat and water; it must have, so the Arabs say, its foot in the water and its head in the fire. These wells are made possible by depressions, often below sea-level, where the water rises naturally as soon as it is reached from the surface. There is a special corporation of well-seekers called *r'tassa*; they scoop out the sand, and the hole is roughly shored with timbers. As soon as the water is reached it gushes forth. A river has been tapped, even a river with fish in it. But the fish are blind, with scales over the eyes. However, if kept in open, air-lit water for a time, the scales drop off, and the fish can see.

For many years now the French have been busy sinking artesian wells, with the result that villages have sprung into existence where formerly there was nothing but desert. Not by their rule or taxation, but by providing wells, and therefore making cultivation possible, the prestige of the French amongst the tribes has been enhanced.

One tribe, the Merazique, instead of lifting the water to the gardens, sink their gardens to water-level. This makes irrigation needless; but it renders the danger by the ever-encroaching sand greater. The elongated depression of the Sahara south of Biskra is known as the *Oued-Rir* ("the river that buries itself"). All over this depression springs have been tapped, with fine results. Natives and Europeans alike are assisted by the Government in well-sinking, and all who benefit by the wells pay in due proportion after the date harvest for the year has been sold.

Since the French started well-sinking in 1856, the depression of the *Oued-Rir* has prospered. The population has doubled; the number of trees has trebled, and the value of the date-palms has multiplied ten-fold.

I was at Tolga at the height of the date harvest. At the head of the palms were great clusters of golden fruit. Arabs and negroes were climbing the palms and cutting the bunches of dates. These were stocked in houses, and then carefully packed. The cases were hoisted on camel back and taken off to Biskra.

In the spring the palms begin to flower. Now there are male and female palms, and the natives climb the male trees and gather pollen, and then the female trees are climbed and the male pollen carefully shaken on the bursting blossoms. This ensures a fine crop. There are many kinds and qualities of dates. The best, big and soft and golden, is the *deglat-noir*. A good palm yields on an average a hundred and twenty pounds of dates a year, and a hectare, about two and a half acres of palms, gives about seven tons. Every palm-tree is taxed by the Government.

### El Kantara !

You look back, northwards, from Biskra, and you see the Atlas Mountains lurid in the dawn and shadowy grey-blue in the dusk. The rains which sweep the mountains seldom travel beyond the ridge. Far off you see the thunderstorms at play, but they keep to the rugged lands.

Those mountains are like a stubborn bar. But

when you get near you find a sudden cleft—a gateway from the north to the desert which Hercules is said to have opened with his foot.

Such is El Kantara—the bridge. You travel amidst a jumble of burnt-bone hills. The hills close in and their sides rear high and jagged. You are passing through a crooked funnel of rocks. Narrower and narrower gets the gorge ; higher and higher rear the rocks. Then swiftly, in the snap of fingers, the yelling train passes the rocks and nothing, nothing lies before you but the bleached plain leading to the Sahara. And yet not all bleached, for there are spots which shimmer, and above the shimmer are black scrolls—oases, apparently hung above the earth.

This gateway to the desert is a wonderful thing. Those indefatigable Romans came here and they flung a bridge across the trickling stream, and scoured a road along the face of the rocks. Part of the bridge remains to this day, easily seen, and with the Roman inscriptions well marked. The French, however, have built another bridge, broader and higher, and the road, in gradient and upkeep, is all a good road should be.

In the fresh of the morning I sat on the bridge, dangling my legs, smoking a pipe, and being amused at several Arab boys bathing and splashing each other. Down the road crawled a camel caravan, a hundred camels and more, a whole tribe on the move, Arabs and their women, slaves, horses, dogs—a slow-moving, motley, picturesque throng, joyous at the sight of the desert.

A long, echoing whistle, and from the tunnel

up the hill-side rushed and rumbled a train, and from the carriage windows peered Europeans and Orientals.

Here, at the gate of the desert, were the ancient and the modern ways of travel.

Roman legions marched along this road. Here came a touring motor-car covered in dust.

Pleasant brook-cut groves make El Kantara an exquisite spot—a bit of loveliness at the bottom of a chasm. A quiet secluded inn was sufficient excuse for a dawdling stay. In front is a balcony heavy with mulberry trees. There is a well from which icy water can be drawn. There is a Roman pedestal which the landlord dug up in his garden. It is all very peaceful and drowsy. Two white-robed Arabs, drinking syrup of strawberries are evidently discussing business with a withered Frenchman, who is sipping absinthe and interminably smoking cigarettes. The hotel is whitewashed, and has green shutters, and my friend and I lunch in the cool of a shaded room. It is a happy, slumbrous inn, and some day I shall go there again.

But the Biskra tout has come to El Kantara. There he is—three of the breed—standing beyond the gates of the inn, and whilst we have our coffee he babbles, "Geed (guide); ver nice; ver good; me geed; yes; ver nice, ver good, ver expensive, yes." That was the range of English. He would not be shoo'd away; he would not be cursed away; the threat of a bucket of water only made him grin. When we went out he followed us—at a distance. Yet the brightness of these Arab boys, their imitative-ness, their histrionic powers, made us smile.

We saunter through the gate of the desert to where are three Arab villages, crooked and mud-built. Here the stream which trips its way down the gorge is captured, and makes fruitful an oasis where grow ninety thousand date-palms. The villages give off the odour of dry dung. Leprous-looking, sore-eyed and ragged villagers keep in our trail. Maybe they thought we were intent on purloining the beauties of their households. If they had beauties they were hidden behind the mud walls.

But El Kantara is a lovely spot, too often missed by the tourist in his or her hurry to reach over-rated Biskra.

## CHAPTER XII

### RUINS, ROMAN AND OTHERWISE

A CRISP autumn morning, a Roman road in North Africa, and a French automobile.

Burr-and-whizz—we left Batna and were out upon the plains, and frightening to distraction Arabs and their donkeys who were bringing vegetables in to market.

Whoo-o-o-o!—how we went along the road, straight, curving, heaving, dipping, with no thought of a constable to demand our names and addresses and to provide intimation we would hear more about travelling at such a speed. The siren shrieked like a pained daughter of the Valkyrie, and far ahead mules and camels and natives desperately tumbled off the road to make way for us. The startled-eyed Arabs stared at us. We gave them a wave of the hand; we were away, leaving a cloud of dust.

The harvest had been garnered and the land on each side was close-cropped with stubble. Talk about land on the prairies of western Canada being wooed into wondrous fertility in this Christian twentieth century! Why, these plains grew wheat before there were any Christian centuries. These were the plains which supplied Rome with corn. This was the Roman Mauretania, Rome's great colony, where grew the wheat to provide Romans with bread.

The Roman politicians of two thousand years ago no doubt talked of Imperialism and the wonderful opening for young men in the colony of Mauretania. And the Romans built beautiful cities—why, I was journeying at forty miles an hour to visit the Winnipeg of Mauretania. But Rome has gone. Timgad, the Roman Winnipeg, is a heap of ruins.

I wonder whether, in the turn of the wheel, the British Empire will have its decline and fall, and the day come when tourists, far down the range of generations to be born, will idle amongst the ruins of the real Winnipeg, and talk about the kind of people who raised a great city on the plains of Canada?

We slowed down as we entered a tree-girt little town. Arabs slithered along the street. Frenchmen were sipping absinthe at a tiny café. Down the way came a gang of prisoners, sad ruffians in corduroys, taken out, in the charge of men with guns, to do road repairing. There was a big building which looked like a convent; it was the prison.

This is Lambessa. You never heard of Lambessa? Well, neither had I till yesternight, when I "read it up." Lambessa, know you, was the headquarters of the famous Third Augustan Legion. Can you hear the shouts of the Roman generals and the tramp of the feet of Roman soldiers? Swaggering soldiers who were charged with the defence of North Africa! What a bad time they would have given anyone who mentioned a dream that Roman power would wane and disappear, and that the wretched Gallic race would ultimately rule the land. But they have gone.

There, however, lying outside the modern town

of Lambessa are the ruins of this ancient Lambæsis. Sturdy ruins. The Prætorium, high, strong, columned. dark with age, stands stiffly, as though challenging the centuries to do their worst. Grand arches, an arch to Septimus Severus and an arch to Commodus, and a temple to Æsculapius, and an amphitheatre to hold ten thousand people at holiday entertainments. They had no newspapers in those days, but chisels and stones tell of the deeds of their great men "in the brave days of old." Well, well; they have gone, and goats are rummaging for food amongst the rank vegetation in the amphitheatre, and Frenchmen are growing grapes where the Roman warriors drilled.

The Roman road from Lambessa to Timgad runs straight up and down the heaving country, with no deviations to seek a gentler incline. It is overgrown with grass, but it is well marked. The modern French road serpentine.

Away we went, ticking off the miles. A rise. Before us lay a beautiful country, saucer-shaped. On the distant slope we saw what looked like a tumble of stones—and were those two chimneys? No, they were delicate columns, and the tumble of stones was Timgad (ancient Thamugadi).

Whizz, whizz went the automobile. The curator received us with a smile, and we passed into the region of long ago.

The morning was now warm and genial. The city of Timgad stood silent. It was like a monument to itself. I felt I was walking in a cemetery. By the walls of the little museum were busts of Romans, statues of Roman goddesses, and I did not like their cold, stony stare. I imagined they resented the



intrusion of the modern. But I was sorry for the goddesses who had lost their noses and the gods whose legs had been amputated at the knees.

This is the "show" city of Roman remains in northern Africa. The main street, heavily flagged with stones, shows the deep ruts of the carts. There is a crack, and a peep can be got into the dry drain.

What fine buildings and magnificent colonnades ! There is the semicircular Curia, with marble seats for the senators, and on the pedestals are the names, as though graven last year, of men who were important in their day. I stood before one pillar and I wanted to shake hands with the man in whose memory it was erected. Through the ages I could hear his laugh, and through the haze of time I could see his happy face. He had a philosophy, and it was carved in stone : " To hunt, to play, to laugh—that is life ! "

Trajan's arch : what a noble and enduring monument it is. And the baths—all there save the roof—cold baths and hot vapour baths, swimming tanks, reposing and dressing-rooms. Why, the bricks are so new one might think it was the beginning of a new erection instead of the ruins of an old place. Here, all that remains of the library. Was it given by some Roman Andrew Carnegie ? And the theatre, the stage, the high tiers of seats. A year or two ago French players came and acted a Roman drama here, and the audience was French ladies and gentlemen in dainty *frou-frou* dresses and fashionable bonnets, and patent leather, high-heeled boots and frock coats—and possibly silk hats. What a contrast to the audiences for which this theatre was built !

But no Romans now. Tingad basks silently in

the sun. Oh, the glory of Timgad ! Pompeii is a poor show compared with Timgad.

There is the market-place, but the stone stalls are empty, and a big lizard scurries before me. There are temples and fluted columns and carved cornices, and many marble pillars lying on their side. In the museum are statues and mosaics, and frescoes and lamps and sarcophagi.

Timgad stands where six Roman roads intersected. But of the Romans, who proudly built their beautiful city, and marketed, and read books in the library, and bathed, and crowded the theatre—not one. Room for a moralising but depressing homily here.

A French boy ran up. He was from the little French restaurant beyond the ruins. Would we like déjeuner before returning to Batna ? They had excellent wine.

What a story Mauretania has to tell of race rolling over race in its possession ! The Berbers, or barbarians, the oldest people to be traced, are now to be found in the hilly regions to which their ancestors retired before repeated invasions. But thirty-four hundred years ago they were a powerful people, and even made onslaught upon Egypt.

The Phœnicians came in their galleys along the north African coast fourteen hundred years before Christ was born. Carthage was the pearl of their cities. The Carthaginians prospered mightily in trade, waxed valiant in war, and after mastering Spain and Sicily, shook their fists in the face of Rome.

Hannibal sent the terror of his name through the civilised world. Carthage waned in power. Spain went; Sicily went; Rome waged war and brought Carthage to ignominy. A flame blazed in the heart of the Carthaginians; they would repel the Romans. The Romans decreed the fair city of Carthage should be destroyed; the heart was to be torn out of the people. The Carthaginians resisted desperately. Everything—even precious things from the temples—were devoted to the making of arms. The women cut off their hair to be used as bowstrings. But of no avail. Crash went the walls; in poured the Romans; invaders and defenders fought in streets slippery with blood. The noblest Carthaginians, driven back to the topmost point of their city, set fire to their beloved Acropolis and there died. That was the end of the city of Dido. The Romans wept at the bravery of the enemy.

Rome stepped into the Carthaginian shoes. The land was fertile and prosperous. Roads were made; cities were built. For there are Roman remains in Mauretania, from the Gulf of Tunis to the Straits of Gibraltar, which show that when the Romans, settled they had “come to stay.” They never penetrated the desert; they never got more than a couple of hundred miles from the seaboard.

But eastward, right to the limits of Tunisia, are ruins, grand, forlorn, slowly crumbling. If there was “jerry building” in the days of the Romans, the remains have mingled with the sands. There was good work, and there it stands. Races have surged across this land—Phœnician, Carthaginian, Roman, Vandal, Byzantine, Arab—but the most

enduring remains are the Roman. They were thorough.

Utica, the capital of Roman Africa, is now nothing but a dirty Arab village called Bou Chater. Carthage was rebuilt, the city of Cæsar rose on the ashes of the city of Dido, but it took two hundred years before the whole of the coast lands were Roman. From Tunis to Tangier were more than a hundred ports. To this day the natives call all Europeans *Roumis* (Romans). In the wake of the Romans came Christianity. It spread like a fiery cross; the natives stretched out their arms to it; it was the religion of the poor and the oppressed; they were poor, and crushed by the Romans. When in corners of Mauretania, note the tattooed cross on the cheeks of the natives; they do not know why they put that cross except that it has always been the custom of their people, but it is a relic of the days, seventeen centuries ago, when their ancestors proclaimed their Christian faith.

The sap went from the sinews of Roman rule. Bad government was succeeded by anarchy. Down came the Vandals like wolves. They swept from Spain into Africa under Genseric, scourged the country and wiped out all civilisation. For fifty years the Vandals worked havoc in the land. The Byzantine Empire had grown in eastern Europe. Fleets and armies came, and the Vandals were expelled by the Greeks. The Greeks were both oppressive and weak. They never held the Berbers in thralldom.

Then the Arab invasion, coming a few years after the death of Mohammed. The Arabs conquered

easily. Christianity died, and the religion of Islam spread.

A second invasion, about the time of the Norman conquest in England, and Arabs—by the people loosely called Moors—won the land to the Atlantic, crossed to Spain, and conquered the lower part of the peninsula. Berber risings, rival claimants to the kingship, internal feuds for nigh four hundred years. The Christians flung the Moors from Spain. Spanish and Portuguese came and seized the best of the ports. Those were the times of Charles V., grand days in the story of Spain, and it looked as though North Africa would be a Spanish colony. But Spain's thoughts were then aglow with the discoveries of Columbus; a new way to the riches of India had been found. Africa was not sufficiently cared for.

So the two Corsair brothers, Aroudj and Khair-ed-Din, both known as Barbarossa, renegade Greeks, came along, drove the Spaniards from Algiers, and placed the land of Mauretania—Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco—under the Turkish sultans. Flourishing years of piracy and of slavery, until that fine old English sailor, Admiral Blake, in 1654, entered Tunis harbour, notwithstanding the fire of the batteries; and, under cover of the smoke, his men approaching in small boats, destroyed the entire piratical fleet of the Bey of Tunis. But there were other pirates elsewhere, and for years the English were sending ships, manned by eager sailors, to have a fight with the pirates. France and Holland joined, and many a bombardment there was to frighten the Turks and Arabs into yielding up their Christian slaves. A favourite threat of the Algiers Deys, when attacked,

was to promise to fire Europeans from the mouth of a cannon if the foreign ships opened fire on the town. Sometimes the threat was effectual; when it was not, the Dey did as he said he would. On one occasion forty-nine French slaves were murdered in this manner.

French interests began to grow. The French Government backed up Frenchmen who had commercial disputes with the Deys of Algiers. France waited her chance. It came when the Dey slapped the face of the French Consul. Algiers passed into the possession of France. The troublesome tribes in the south gave France another excuse for establishing a "Protectorate" over Tunisia which, however, is as much French territory as is Algiers. And France is now stretching her fingers into Morocco.

Of a variegated pattern is the history of North Africa. It makes one wonder how long the French occupation will last.

The October afternoon was palpitating. The heat was sucking all the strength that was in me, and there were moments when I would have given much for the shadow of a tree.

I was fascinated. I stood on the cactus-strewn, brown highland and looked about on all that remained of Carthage, the city of the Phœnicians, the heritage of Rome, the place where lovely Dido wept, where Salambo loved, the city which was ravished by the Vandals, reduced to ruins by the Arabs—and has lain forgotten through the centuries.

Fifteen years had glided from my life since last I stood on the dust of Carthage, and the old emotions

swept over me again. No schoolboy who has read about the Punic Wars, who knows the story of Hannibal, can think of the good old fighting days of over two thousand years ago without a pant coming into his blood.

Out on the blue waters of the Mediterranean a red-funnelled boat is gliding. She is the mail from Marseilles, and is bringing letters and newspapers from home. On the slip of the hill, at my feet almost, an electric tramcar goes trundling by. Toot-toot! and I catch a glimpse of the dust cloud raised by a motor hurrying from Tunis to Marsa. A wall-eyed Arab cringes up and wants to sell me old coins. There is an inn close by and two Frenchmen are guzzling bottled beer.

Very modern, isn't it?

From the delved sands heave fragments of walls, a few stumps of marble pillars, rubble-strewn old cisterns. Across the land where the scant corn has been garnered I kick up bits of pottery, a carved bit of marble as large as my hand. And that is all that remains of Carthage. It is all broken and buried—a dead thing among the cities of the world.

But in my vision, this hot, sweltering, eye-aching afternoon, I see the ships of the Phœnicians beating across the waters of the bay twenty-seven hundred years ago. There are modern villas now by the harbour where the Phœnician ships rode.

I would be happy with my cigar strolling among the scraps of splendour. But I am worried by a guide. He will show me everything and tell me everything for five francs. I assure him I do not want him to tell me anything, and I can find my

way by myself. He says I will lose my way, and lowers his price to four francs. I tell him I have not four francs to spare. He says he will come for three francs. I tell him to go away. In a gust of goodwill he says he will be my guide all the afternoon for two francs. I tell him to get out. He says he would give me a Roman coin, found in the ruins, if I would employ him for one franc fifty centimes. I tell him to clear out. Then he goes down the road kicking any stray bit of ruin that is lying in the way.

But it is hot, and I seek shadow under the Cathedral of St. Louis, erected by the good Cardinal Lavignerie. The Cardinal did a noble work for Christianity in Algeria; but he might have built his cathedral somewhere else. It may strike some as a grand idea to build a Christian cathedral on the mount where stood the pagan Temple of Concord. But at the risk of sacrilegious thought, I declare it is not a pretty building, and its huge rawness does much to spoil the aroma of antiquity which one can breathe whilst watching the relic-strewn dunes of Carthage.

The guide-book gives you a map to help you to find where famous buildings stood. But happily you can weave your picture by yourself.

That is what I like best: to sit and smoke, and in the blue of my cigar fumes make the mind play cinematograph, and give me a moving picture of the pageants that are now but dreams. There stood the Megara, a building sixty feet high: stables for three hundred elephants, stalls for four thousand horses, lodgings for twenty thousand foot soldiers



and four thousand horsemen. Ramp—and they all come out together, and I see them down the road near the sea. Over there was a wine cellar, time of Augustus; the bricks have the dates of their making, and most are about twenty-five years before Christ. Down the slope was the Forum, the Temple of Apollo, the lovely baths of Theodora. You see the ladies coming from the bath: you see the libations to Apollo: you hear the hoarse shouts from the amphitheatre: it is a holiday and Christian martyrs are being tortured.

Earlier to-day I saw a stretch of the aqueduct, over a hundred miles long, sometimes in underground channels, sometimes over thousands of lofty arches—the Vandals left a few hundred—capable of delivering six million gallons of water. Not much of the amphitheatre left, but writers say it was a magnificent building.

A very drowsy place to-day. On March the seventh, year 202, two Christian women fought with wild beasts in the amphitheatre and were martyred. On March the seventh, year 1895, High Mass was celebrated in the amphitheatre by the Primate of Africa.

I have been in the Musée Alaoui—once the harem of Mohammed Bey—and there I saw much that has been recovered of Carthage in its prime. Time falls away. I ignore the defacement of the marbles, the marble gods reduced to torsos, the goddesses with chipped features and limbless. I see the fine mailed figures of Roman warriors, and I cannot think two thousand years have gone since a chisel carved them. The mosaics—hunting scenes, scenes of the seasons,

laughing nymphs from the sea, features of conquerors—are as bright as though done yesterday. A bronze youth laughs. A blind old man, wrinkle-browed, raises his sightless eyes in supplication. There is the bust of a woman, matronly, her hair wavy and sweeping from a broad forehead—I am positive I have recently met her somewhere in a London drawing-room. There is a mosaic of Virgil dictating the *Æneid*. There are masques of comedy and tragedy. There are marble urns with gay figures dancing round them. There are shy, nude women with dainty limbs. I look into the quiet marble countenances and wonder if the little models were happy women—two thousand years ago?

My reverie is broken. An Arab boy comes up and inquires if I will buy two live ducks. What do I want with two live ducks? I glance at my watch, run down the hill, and catch the electric car back to Tunis.

## CHAPTER XIII

### MONSIEUR TALKS ABOUT HIMSELF

SOME things are hard to believe—even when you see them. Travel in Africa, that means a trail of ebony-skinned porters, with great bundles on their heads, stalking single-file through jungle ; or it means camel caravans rhythmically surging across the sands. A lumbering diligence seems too European ; it does not fit the picture. As for motor-cars, swishing along the highways, driven by the conventional chauffeur, and carrying the conventional females swathed in dust-coats and goggles and thick veils, why they are an outrage on our long-held beliefs on the way to see Africa.

I never watched a train rolling and rattling and shrieking its way across the desert without the surprise of the philosopher who found the fly in the amber and wondered "how the devil it got there." There are good railways in Mauretania, especially the line belonging to the Paris-Lyons and Mediterranean Company. There are so-so lines in Tunisia. There are wretchedly bad ways, dirty carriages and broken-down engines on the East Algerian line, now controlled by the State.

It was always with the feeling that some accident had happened, or that I was in a dream, when at a wayside Algerian station I saw the familiar vehicles

of the International Sleeping-Car Company, with the chocolate-clad attendant by the door. And the restaurant-car—just the same as in Europe, with the thick blue cups for the soup, and the thick blue plates for the same old omelette, the same old chicken, the same old sweets, and the same old and familiar advertisements of Hungarian mineral waters, and the luxurious ships by which you ought to go to America, and the hotels at which you ought to stay when in Paris.

Now I had been riding horseback from four in the morning till two o'clock in the afternoon, over rocks and through sand and past basking Arab villages. Tired and clammy and grimy, I caught the express. It was good to have a chair after the ache of the saddle, and it was very good to pull down the blind and shut out the glare. It was excellent to have a long tumbler and a bottle of white wine and mineral water and a bucket of ice placed before me. I absorbed the drink like the parched, sand-laden animal I was.

Monsieur was sitting on the other side of the little brown table. He was carefully drawing at the last half-inch of a cigar in a paper and quill holder. He was a prosperous, fat Frenchman, with cropped hair and scissored beard, and a blasé look in his pursy eye. But there was a yellow tinge to his skin which told he had lived in the sun.

I sighed my thanks for a good drink. Particularly was I thankful that on the restaurant-car of the Wagons-Lit Company a serviceable bottle of Algerian white wine could be got for sixty centimes, and a good wine for one franc twenty centimes the bottle.

"But not for long," answered Monsieur, flicking the end of his cigar into the ash-tray. "Algerian wine has come into its own. You like it; yes, it is a wine with bouquet. The grape crop has failed in France; there is no French wine this year [1910]. So Algerian wine, which was the Cinderella of vintages, is now wanted by France. It will be sold in London as Sauterne and Graves, and you will pay six, eight francs a bottle for it. Algerian vine-growers have waited for years. People thought Algerian wine must be poor; they scoffed at it. You know that at all our hotels the wine of the table has been free. But not now; a charge has to be made, or the wine is weakened by water. Because the French crop has failed, the price of Algerian wine has doubled, trebled. Fortunes are being made. Our wine is liquid gold. May I recommend a really good Algerian wine to you?"

The congratulations of a foreigner were offered on the happy turn of the wheel of Algerian fortune. Then I made polite remarks on the success of France in North Africa.

"Yes," Monsieur added, and his views were those of a growing proportion of Algerian-born Frenchmen; "but we are too much hampered by administration from Paris. Geographically, Algeria is a separate country from France; politically, it is the same country. We send our representatives to the Chamber of Deputies. Algiers is as much a French port as is Marseilles. You know France has its laws governing coast trade, and Algeria is part of the coast of France. That is bad for us. Why? Because it checks competition by foreign ships.

How did you come here? Ah, from Marseilles! Did you ever travel in more expensive and less comfortable boats in your life? We Algerians protest and we grumble; but there is no redress. There is practically a monopoly. Manufactured articles from France come here free. Goods from other countries are taxed, but the money is for France, of which Algeria is counted a part, and not for Algeria. We would like to have our own custom duties for the benefit of Algeria."

"That rather suggests independence from France," I ventured.

"Precisely. We Algerians recognise what we owe to France. But living in another country, born in another country, many of us with no family relationship with France, we are growing into a separate nation. Do not look astonished; it is true. But do not think we are disloyal to France—never! never! Algerian property we want to be for the benefit of Algiers. The time is coming—not at once, maybe not for a long time—when Algeria will want to be like a British colony, managing its own affairs in its own interest, and at the same time proud to belong to the French Empire."

"But you need colonists," I said. "Whilst I have been struck with the fine way Algeria is administered, I have not noticed that the real work of colonising is done by Frenchmen. Your white labouring population, outside the towns, are either Italians or Maltese or Spaniards."

"That is true," replied Monsieur. "Remember that only within the last ten years Algeria is recognised as something besides a French possession. It is a

great food-producing area. I have mentioned to you the advance we have made in wine production. There lies a great trade. In vegetables and in fruits our climate is such that we can get into the Paris market six weeks ahead of the South of France, and in distance Paris is only a day and a half journey from Algiers. To the Romans the rich land of the northern plains were the grounds for growing grain. This is again going to be a great wheat-growing area. Young Frenchmen, more than perhaps you think, are coming here and are wheat-raising and doing well. I have read about the wheat areas in Canada—wonderful, wonderful! But here we have no harsh winter; the soil is good, and we have plenty of rain. Native labour is cheap. It is not so good as white labour, but its cheapness more than compensates. So the French farmer coming here with a little capital has good chances, splendid chances. Farmers are beginning to come; you can see what they are doing in the Oran province. But I admit freights are too high, railway and steamship. That is one of the reasons why we Algerians want to run the country as a self-governing colony. Then we can bring pressure to bear on the French Government; we can threaten to tax French-made goods and give other countries an equal chance—which would injure the carrying trade from France—unless the French Government brings pressure to lower the rates."

"Do the French people realise this?"

"They do not," said Monsieur. "Frenchmen are the most ignorant people on earth about other countries. The ordinary Parisian thinks Algeria is a terrible place with nothing but sand, and fit only

for Zouaves. When they come here on a visit—and more English and Americans come than French—they are surprised. To the south there is a wonderful trade in alfa grass for paper manufacture. There are the oases where dates are grown. All things considered, we have done well in the construction of railways.”

“You have done splendidly,” I interjected.

“But think of the pockets of rich country we shall tap when there are more railways to the south,” he went on. “Think of the millions of blacks away there to the south. There is trade there, below Ghardaia, and even below El-Golea, a tremendous trade for cotton goods. And we want more railways.”

“But the country is still restless, amongst the Touaregs, the black veiled men, for instance,” I mentioned.

“That is getting a thing of the past,” was the reply. “The nomad tribes used to raid our outposts, but nearly ten years ago the companies of the Saharan oases were formed to replace regular troops. They are natives, officered by Frenchmen—infantry, cavalry and *méharistes* (camel corps) with light field-pieces. So the south country is now well-policed, and the outposts are linked up by telegraph. Our authorities make much of the chiefs and decorate them. Besides, the natives are realising the advantages of having an easy market for their produce. That is better than soldiers. We are going farther and farther south, and though, now and again, there is trouble with the nomad tribes, the penetration is peaceful on the whole.”

Monsieur spoke with enthusiasm. He was



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Algerian born. He was a business man with many irons in the fire. He was keeping them all hot. We exchanged cards, and he invited me to visit his vineyards.

The train rolled and rumbled over the baked land. We had the blinds down, but points of light struck through the apertures like gleaming sabres. We touched the little bell and the tinkle awoke the tired-out attendant. We ordered a bottle of white wine and mineral water and lots of ice. We drank. Thirst is horrible, but the relief of thirst is one of the three exquisite sensations in the world. There was no corridor connection between the restaurant-car and the rest of the train. When the car was mounted it was necessary to remain until the train reached another stopping-place. There is only one car, and all the passengers—first, second and third class—use it. First-class passengers stay as long as they like; second class are not supposed to, but they do. Indeed "the man who knows," and who is taking a journey of only two or three hours, generally buys a second-class ticket, and then spends his time in the restaurant-car. Third-class passengers, however, are generally given the intimation to clear out at the station after their meal or beverage is finished.

Monsieur talked sheep. Pasturage is not of the best, but a shepherd is not expensive and the sheep are moved slowly from one feeding ground to another—fine sheep, yielding good wool and fine mutton. There is a great prospect in the sheep industry.

Various types of men joined us. Several were commercial travellers. Others were men of the country.

"Every department of France," said Monsieur, "has provided colonists for Algiers. At first Corsica and the south led the way—you will have noticed our French is not Parisian—and then Alsace-Lorraine. Do not forget that much more than half the French population was born in Algeria. The country is still rather run on bureaucratic lines, and I am afraid our politics are sordid. We have not the initiative of the British in colonisation. When we have a scheme we do not set about doing it. We spend a lot of time in endeavouring to squeeze some financial assistance out of the Government. There is too much—oh, I know it—too much palm-oiling and bribery and corruption to make us happy. But you have that in most new countries, in the South American Republics, in the United States itself. But I have faith. We are not decadent, we Algerians; we are rearing a new race on the French stock, and we have a grand hope for the future. Recent legislation has had the effect of increasing the French population by nationalisation. The Maltese who come here soon assimilate with the French-born. But Spaniards and Italians retain their individuality—in many of the communes they have electoral majorities—and their influence on our political future is quite as serious as that of the Jews. The Jews, even the descendants of those who have lived in North Africa for centuries, have no association with France, and do not even speak the French tongue, but they are very powerful. They get the mastery here in finance as in other countries. They are Jews first and French citizens afterwards. In a number of communes they are the richer and

more important; they hold the balance, and by throwing their vote on one side or the other they can return what candidate they like to the Chamber of Deputies. All candidates play to catch the Jewish vote—oh, very good for the Jews. Well, possibly you know something of the Jewish character. They nip the Arabs, they nip the Spaniards, they nip the Italians—they nip all of us. I do not want to be unfair; the Jew sees further than we do—his glance travels along more curves than ours does—and he gets ahead of us. The richest people in Algeria to-day are the Jews. But you can understand the bitterness of the anti-Jewish feeling. It often blazes—but it subsides.”

“But how do the other races get on together?” I inquired.

“We all hate the Jews. The Arabs hate them more than we do, because the Jews are cleverer than we are,” said Monsieur, taking a long draught. “Some day, it may be, French, Spanish and Italian Algerians will mix. But though we remain distinct, none of us are like the home French, Spaniards or Italians. We are in a different climate. I read a magazine article about Australia—what an enormous continent! Algeria is one-third of a million square miles, and yet we have a population larger than Australia; we are nearing six million inhabitants. We French number three hundred thousand, one Frenchman to every square mile of Algeria, though that includes our soldiers—about forty thousand. This is the thing to remember, over two hundred thousand of the Europeans in Algiers are engaged in agriculture. That is very good for Algeria. None

of your British colonies—certainly not Australia, about which I read an article—can show such a fine proportion of its white population engaged on the land. You are interested in the success of our country. Ah! it is pleasant to meet you British. You always want to know things. Now, most French visitors only want to know which is the best café in a town. I will tell you; I study Algeria. I make my money here. Do you know that last year Algeria—little Algeria—produced two hundred million gallons of wine? Do you know we produced over twelve million gallons of olive oil? Do you know that we have seven million acres under cultivation, producing wheat, barley and oats? Do you know we have over six million acres of forest, much of it cork-producing? That we produce silk cocoons nearing a hundred thousand ounces a year? That—I don't include Tunis—we have well over two thousand miles of railroad? You look surprised! Of course. French newspapers do not bother much about Algeria. British papers only write about success in their own colonies. American papers only write about themselves. But Algeria counts. Algeria when developed will be of marvellous use to the millions of Europe. I am an Algerian, and I have faith in Algeria. *À votre santé, monsieur!*"

"*À la vôtre!*" said I.

## CHAPTER XIV

### VIGNETTES

It was Ali Mohammed's sister, Lips of Pomegranate, who attracted.

Ali Mohammed was a young Oriental, who put on airs amongst his fellows because he had been to France. He was enthusiastic about Europe and its ways, and openly paraded his views that the Arab was out of date. That was because he was green in years. He will change as he gets older.

He was frankly envious of my roving life. He sighed, and said that some day he would travel.

If I would visit his house, visit his sister and himself, an honour would be done his miserable abode which could never be forgotten. He loved Europeans. He had told his sister about me. She, though strict amongst Moslems and always veiled when in the bazaars, had never met Europeans, except two frowsy women, who said they were sorry for her. Ali Mohammed said I was his friend, and would I watch the death of the day on the desert from his housetop ?

That is how I came to know Lips of Pomegranate.

Only the aroma of remembrance remains of that lurid, palpitating afternoon when Ali Mohammed, tall and slim, with the tiniest moustache, with eyes

that were brown and liquid and almost feminine—a young Arab gentleman in purple burnous and with a sprig of jasmine over his ear—walked with me through the white streets. He was honoured. I got rather tired of his insistence that my visit to his house filled him with honour.

A big black smudge in a white wall, and a square oaken door. He knocked. A crumpled old fellow, with cracked, leathern skin and rheumy eyes and grizzled beard, opened the door. A dark cool passage, and an Arabic courtyard bathed in sunlight.

Though the sun was falling, the air was sultry and heavy with languor. But there was the sweet music of swiftly dripping water. A boy, as brown as a nut and clad in nothing more than what at home would have been known as a white cotton night-shirt, came forward with a long-spouted silver urn and poured scented water over our hands, which made them cool and fragrant. We patted the water on our lips to get refreshment. And the little kerchiefs handed were of saffron silk.

Ali Mohammed cried aloud, and from somewhere came a girl's answering treble, soft like a whisper in the dark. Ali smiled and showed his teeth, so very white and so very regular.

There were dark alcoves, cushioned with mats, and hung with scrolls carrying golden axioms from the Koran. Heavy curtains hung before arched doors.

Would I go upon the roof ?

My eyes blinked when again I emerged into the sunlight. The sky threw down the reflection of hot

brass. The flat white roof and the low white parapet were dazzling.

In a corner were cushions, and on them sat a bundle of white. An old hag, wizened, bow-legged and in scant green trousers, shuffled in yellow heelless slippers. Ali muttered something, and the hag showed her old teeth, grunted and disappeared.

We went to the bundle of white, which remained motionless. Ali laughed, and exclaimed he had brought the *Roumi*.

The bundle half turned. The over-hood of white was thrown back.

I saw two large eyes, light brown like those of a young gazelle, looking at me over the top of a veil. A long, thin hand, delicately brown, with henna on the nails, and gold ornaments on the wrist, was stretched forth. I took the proffered hand, and the palm was warm and caressing.

Ali Mohammed was excited. Would I not sit down ?

Here on a little table, no higher than a footstool, were sweet Arab cakes, dishes of honey, fruits, amber-hued dates, mint tea, and water chilled in porous flacons.

He was so sorry Lips of Pomegranate spoke no language but Arabic, and she was sorry ; but she was honoured I had come to her brother's house. Never before in her life had she met a *Roumi*. She was shy. She did not know the ways of the *Roumis*. *Roumis* and their ladies, unveiled, met and talked and walked and were friends—so different from the ways of the Moslem world. She did not understand. He was no conventional Arab. I was a European

gentleman. He loved the life of Europe. But Lips of Pomegranate was a woman. I would forgive. They were both honoured.

I smiled at Lips of Pomegranate, and though the veil hid all but her eyes I knew there was a smile in reply. Mysterious those unblinking eyes, with the black arched eyebrows made blacker with kohl, and a little streak of kohl joining the arches. Deep and unfathomable eyes, steady in their gaze, that sent a pleasurable shiver through an impressionable man.

I was thirsty, and I said so. Ali translated. Lips of Pomegranate poured water into a goblet of copper and silver, and holding it in both her little hands, held it toward me. Though seated on the floor, I made a low bow and drank.

She offered cakes, and Ali and I ate. But Lips of Pomegranate was silent and ate not. So I protested. Ali said something. Lips of Pomegranate hung her head. Ali spoke again. Then she raised her delicate hands, and with a little movement loosed her veil, which fell upon her lap.

She blushed. The hot blood showed through the soft olive skin.

Yes, she was beautiful. I felt Ali's gaze upon me, and I knew instinctively he was wondering whether I, the *Roumi*, was thinking his sister was beautiful.

It was beauty with something of the exotic loveliness of the orchid about it. She was young and fragile. The face was oval, the narrow nose was semitic; the lips were small and full and pouting and red and maddening. It was the face of a



woman which a man's imagination conjures when it roams after reading Hafiz and Sadi and Omar Khayyám.

Hesitatingly, she raised her head until those soft eyes looked, with what I fondly thought was a lingering, searching look—looked straight at me as though in her little Oriental brain was the fever to fathom what was passing in the mind of the stranger—this big, awkward-limbed man from a far land.

Was the coquettishness of the woman triumphing over the shyness of the harem girl, and was she endeavouring to cast the spell of her eastern fascination over me? Maybe she interpreted the hot colour which came to my cheek. She dropped her eyes suddenly.

Turning to Ali, I said that if Lips of Pomegranate were the sister of an English friend, I would have no hesitation in congratulating him. Lips of Pomegranate, intuitively, instinctively, knowing I was talking about her, questioned her brother. He told her what I said, for a deep glow suffused countenance and neck.

A lovely creature. I looked upon her and my senses became as if soaked in opium. I was filled with an ecstasy of emotion.

The sun began to dip. I realised that, and I murmured I had come to see the view. I jumped to my feet. Ali Mohammed rose and then offered cigarettes.

Lips of Pomegranate rose. How tall she was—as tall as I myself. I asked if she would care for a Russian cigarette, and I produced my case. She bent,

as she took the thin cardboard tube between her lips whilst I held a match. She smiled her thanks. It was a ravishing, provoking smile, tinged with sensuousness, and the minx knew it.

She lost her shyness. She threw aside her white cloak, which had umbrella'd her from the sun. Her dress was black and green edged with gold, a black zouave jacket, and the filmy gauze did nothing to hide the cadenced pulsations of her breasts. No corsets stiffened her waist. She was supple. Her frock clasped close, so that, when she walked, the sway of the slender hips was seen. As she moved across the roof to the parapet, with lithe, almost snake-like, undulations, her wanton walk told of the lazy lasciviousness of her nature.

She knew. She was no woman if she did not know her charms. Her glance was a caress. Those eyes, so timid at first, were capable of the reckless rapture of love. She was a sylph.

The sun sank in glory beyond the golden desert, and pensiveness dreamed over the world. The air was thick with the odour of the gardens. The call of the muezzin sounded from the minaret. Spice-haunted dusk came quickly.

I have often thought of Lips of Pomegranate. Ali Mohammed has written and told me he has married her to a kaid who lived in the far south-lands.

Bordj-bou-Arréridj is a town which wise people avoid.

It is a mongrel sort of place with an Arabic name, French houses, and a polyglot population. It is as

picturesque as a back-block township in the Australian bush. It was never designed ; it just grew. Then the French military put a big stone wall all round it. An officer told me it was for purposes of defence. But I believe the real reason was to prevent Bordj-bou-Arréridj getting any bigger. I have met a man who, after a good, wine-soaked dinner, found it a very difficult place to pronounce.

There was nothing to do—nothing for me to do—in the swelter of the day but sit in the dirty saloon of the inn, sip iced drinks, smoke cigarettes, and listen to a garrulous, fat madame telling me about her daughters who were doing so well at school. She insisted on showing me a photograph of the pudding-faced damsels—to cheer me up, perhaps, because she saw I was bored.

She regretted there was no bath in the hotel. She did not know whether there was a bath in Bordj-bou-Arréridj, but the chemist down the street could tell me. The chemist laughed. Truly, I was a stranger. Then he apologised for the town ; nobody in Bordj-bou-Arréridj ever bathed. It was a stage in civilisation yet to be achieved.

I made up my mind to dislike the place.

Sheer ennui drove me near sundown for a stroll beyond the walls towards the desert. I seemed to walk through a looking-glass into a jumble of East and West. Never was there such a medley of the Orient and the Occident. I was in the past and in the present. There was the life of a thousand years ago mingled with the life of the twentieth century.

Listen !

There sounded the voice of the muezzin, the call

from the minaret top for all good Mohammedans to pray. But the wailful cry of the holy man was broken by the clang-clang-clang of the little bell swinging over the top of the Catholic church, reminding Christians of evensong.

Roar-roar. Why, there was a railway line. A great passenger train was crashing along, a heavy bellowing engine, long coaches with curtained windows, a restaurant-car, a sleeping-car—I might have been in western Europe. And up from the desert came a long-lined camel caravan, the camels hoisting their heads in disdain at the infidel invention—a railway train. The caravan—camels, Arabs, veiled women, children, dogs, donkeys—came crawling at a drowsy pace suitable to a land of plenty of time. Before the caravan had trudged its own length, the roaring train was a smudge of dust on the horizon.

The camels gave a swerve. Panting by, there grunted a motor-car, bringing four sand-smothered tourists. Two Arabs in flowing robes go scampering across the desert on their caparisoned, long-tailed Arab stallions. A peasant comes, leading an ass, and on the back of the animal is seated his wife with hidden face. Three native girls, kohl-decked, slither along, only their eyes visible, silver anklets making a jangle as they walk. And there is a dapper French officer in riding boots, but walking, accompanying two French ladies on a little saunter in the cool. The ladies are fashionably dressed, and have wide hats, and their patent shoes are neat. They step daintily—a contrast to the waddling Arab women.

Toot-toot ! and a young Frenchman cuts along the road at a great pace on a motor bicycle. Two Arab lads, laughing and moving zig-zag, come on ordinary bicycles. From the stout gates of the town is lumbering an antiquated stage coach. The horses run as though tired ; they are decrepit and frowsy. They are going south, and will not reach their destination till midnight. A throng of white-wrapped Arabs lean from the windows.

On one side I notice a whirring American water-wheel. Along by the town wall a bunch of young French Algerians are kicking a football. At a little distance, devout Moslems, with slippers laid aside, have their faces turned Mecca-wards, and are bowing and kneeling and saying their prayers.

Back in the town, with the lamps now lighting. In a little box of a shop sits a scribe. He has, under dictation, been penning a letter in Arabic, and is drying the ink by running powdery sand over it. But up the street, in a French store, is heard the click of a typewriter.

Arabs are sitting in front of cafés, sucking hubble-bubble water-pipes. I have to walk round them to get to the little tobacconist's shop, where, for two sous each, I can buy some picture-postcards of Bordj-bou-Arréridj.

The whole scene is very typical of the clash of change coming over the towns of northern Africa to-day.

It is not only British officers who lead lonely lives at the outposts of empire.

We were in the rabble city of Constantine, and

were idling an hour before the café of the square, and watching the medley throng.

My friend raised his chin. I followed the direction indicated. Three tables away sat an officer, tall, thin, burnt with the sun. Sadness was in his eyes. Instinctively he looked, gave solemn salutation to my companion, and then continued to sit looking listlessly before him. I am sure he was taking no notice of the laughing, eve-sauntering multitude.

Then I heard his story, and I tell it much as it was told to me :

He was a soldier, earnest, sincere, making progress. But he was not rich, and his fortune carried him to a frontier post, far, far, to the south, beyond the holiday land, across the billowy sands to where men had lost their brownness and were black, and the marauding Touaregs, veiled men of the Sahara, made life stirring. He was in command of a small body of reckless, adventurous French troops, who were never so happy as when expeditions, with plenty of fighting, were the work.

At the end of three years he came out from the savage, thirsty region, and went home—home to his beloved France, home to joyous, pleasure-loving Paris. And there happened the old story. He fell in love, was loved, and they were married.

The bride was blithe-hearted. Her life had been easy, and the happiness of Paris had been hers. But she was proud of her husband. His service, "away down there," had the glamour of romance in it, and her prospective residence "away down there" was nothing more to her than a real page in an

enchanting story-book which she was about to read.

Adieu ! France was waved to with fluttering handkerchiefs, and was lost in mist and in tears. Algeria laughed a welcome of sunshine. Algiers was delightful. Its orientalism fascinated. The military life was gay and she was a bride—she was happy.

Then they went “away down there,” first by train, then by carriage, then by horse, moving in slow stages, and camping each night on the desert. It was all so wonderful, so strange, so like a dream. But she was with him, and the future was a shimmer of mystery.

“In lone and silent hours  
When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,”

she would think of the dancing lights of Paris, so far away ; of her many friends, oh ! so far away ; of her parents, so very, very far away ; and a little dread would creep into her heart ; but she shut her eyes tight as though that would keep out the thoughts which surged.

So they came to the frontier post ; many brown huts, a few palm-trees, some hundreds of miserable Arabs, a plain, ugly, military station, and the troop of soldiery.

She was the only white woman there—the only white woman within hundreds of miles. There was not a person she could be companionable with, except her husband. He was very busy with his work. Sometimes she was afraid.

The life of the natives, so wonderful at first,

ceased to interest. The evening gallop with her husband for a mile or two over the sands ceased to be delightful. They seemed to have said all the things they had to say. She got lonely.

Thoughts of the old girlish life—so far back in her life now—gnawed like hunger. She was tired. She lost her colour, and grew pale and thin. She sickened. She sank, and then she died.

One promise she extracted. She would not be buried in the desert; she would be very unhappy lying alone in the sand. She wanted to be taken home to France, to Paris. She would be happy sleeping always near Paris.

He bravely kept his promise. The soldiers got oil tins, and cut them and resoldered them and made a coffin. She was placed in it, and more sheets of tin were soldered on the top. Next a rough wooden coffin case was made. The coffin was hoisted to the back of a camel. Thus she started her journey homewards.

The husband rode alongside—rode northwards with his bride and Arab attendants. It was the hot time of the year. He did not feel the heat. He thought of other things than the heat. Slowly, over the featureless dunes they journeyed, his bride and he.

Each night, when camp was pitched, the coffin was carried into his tent. From his case he took a bundle of roses, dried, withered and crumpled, but they had been in her wedding-bouquet, and he placed them on the coffin. Being a Catholic, he lit candles and prayed for the peace of her soul. Then he lay down alongside her and slept.



He did this for many days and nights. And in time he got to the edge of civilisation. A train hurried them to Algiers. A boat hurried them across the bright waters of the Mediterranean. A train hurried them to Paris—her Paris, and there she was laid to rest in the cool earth near where she was born.

Not much of a story. But worth remembering. For it is a little bit of the tragedy that goes with men who serve their country in distant parts.

Ah, messieurs !

He stood at a distance, bowed and smirked. He was fleshy and tawny and black-bearded, and I think there was some cunning in his eyes. His fez was claret-hued, and his *gandoura* was dark blue. In one hand was a handkerchief tied in a bundle—weighted with sand.

Ah, messieurs !

We told him we had no illusions. We knew our characters well enough—and something of the character of each other. We did not believe in sand divination. We suggested he was a rogue.

Ah, messieurs !

We were not tourists ; we had no money to waste ; we knew it was all foolery ; how could sand tell the future ? In a civilised country he would be tossed into prison for a charlatan.

Ah, messieurs ! We were unkind. Not really unkind ; it was our fun—he knew we did not mean what we said. He did not ask for money ; he just wanted to show. He was not expensive. No money, nothing, unless he was right.

Well, how much ?

Ah, messieurs ! His usual charge was ten francs each—oh, very cheap ! Really messieurs, very cheap. See ! Four messieurs, all good gentlemen, he would tell the fortunes of the four of us for one napoleon—one small napoleon—very little to good gentlemen like us.

- We had dined well, and wine well, and we had our coffee and our cognac and our cigarettes, and the world was a place to be happy in.

Just for the fun of the thing we agreed.

So we withdrew a little from the Arab café, and reclined within the feathery shadow of the trees. The night was warm.

He sat on the ground in front of us. From his skirt he produced two candles, lit them, and placed them on either side. He untied his handkerchief, and a mound of powdery, pepper-coloured sand fell loose. He ran the palm of his hand over it and smoothed it. He raised his cunning eyes.

Ah, messieurs ! Would one of us press a hand upon the sand. One did.

Carefully he examined the indentations. Then with his own hand he brushed the sand level. With two fingers quivering he ran lines over the sand. He made little delving pressures. With pats he obliterated some of the pressures, muttered thoughtfully, and made strokes in the sand—a sort of dot and dash telegraph system of signs. He did this thrice. Humph ! He had to think it over. He consulted a small book. He rubbed out and made more dots and more dashes.

Ah, monsieur ! And the bright, cunning eyes

gave a glance upward. Monsieur had come a long journey. Monsieur was troubled about something in his own country—what, not quite clear; but monsieur was troubled. Have no fear, all would be right. Ah! very sad—very sad, indeed. Monsieur had experienced disappointments. But do not worry. See; see—yes; it was quite plain, quite marked; monsieur wanted something to happen, something very important; monsieur thought much about it. It was all right; very soon monsieur would have what he wanted. Quite sure. Humph! Very determined man, monsieur. Very strong character. Very determined, want his own way. (A quick look from the weazel eyes.) Will succeed. One, two—humph!—four, six, eight, three, five, seven—yes—not immediately, something very important will happen in monsieur's life; very plain; very marked. You expect; tell me true, monsieur, you expect. Ah! Yes! Me right, you see; me always right. Me not like other sand diviners who just pretend.

We smile and light fresh cigarettes. The sand is tossed, smoothed, and a second British fist is planted on it.

Another story; a variant on possibilities, with an appeal to personal conceit. The sand diviner will not be hastened. He is deliberate. When we hint we have had enough of the fooling he simulates indignation: He is a true man; he is much interested; he takes money, but better than money is looking into the future—the eternal, mysterious sand from Arabia, trodden by the Prophet, knows all things—things gone, things to come—and he, *marabout*, can read the story in the sand.

He tells the four of us our fortunes—and I am sorry to admit I forget most of them. Anyway, with appropriate checks, all was to be well in time.

The night was dreamy, and, though the experience excited at first, we were soon wearied. We had “assisted” at a very pleasant dinner, seasoned with the persiflage of friendship. We threw our napoleon to the sand diviner, bade him a prosperous career, went back to the Arab café, and started on cigars.

## CHAPTER XV

### AMONG THE KABYLES

I HAVE been sitting outside the little mud mosque in this high-poised Kabylie North Africa village of Taourit Beni Menguellet, and have watched the death of the day. It was no gorgeous sunset to rhapsodise about. It was tragic. It was as though some monster of these Djurdjura Mountains had seized the sun, torn it to pieces, and strewn the hills with dark red blood.

Here is a great jumble of ochreish hills, and the heights of the Djurdjura, grey and verdureless in the blaze of noon, are mauve in the failing light. The peaks are a ragged silhouette against deep azure. Far below, heavy gloom fills the valleys, and the mists begin to trail.

Every hill-top in this land of Kabylie has its village, so that each ridge is suggestive of a cock's comb. Where the hill stretches and heaves like the back of a dromedary there is a village. There is not a house in the black valleys nor on the slopes. But not an eminence lacks a cluster of huts. The Kabyles are a hill people, and would die were they to live on the plains. The soil is poor, sandy and rocky. Yet Kabylie is more closely populated than Holland, and there is much growing of olives and figs and apricots and grapes and sweet acorns.

Folks generally think of Africa as desert and camel caravans, and heat that plays like a sea. The region here, however, is like the Tyrol. This morning, before light came, and it was three o'clock in the morning as I put my mule to the broken, rocky, zig-zagging tracks, I shivered with the cold. The wrapping of a heavy cloak about me did not resist the teeth of the night air. I came into this region to see the Kabyles at home, the people who are Numidian in stock, Berbers who were here before the Arabs came, and who were never conquered by the tides of invasion which surged along the African coast, neither by Turks, Romans, Carthaginians nor Vandals, and were the last people to yield to the yoke of the foreigner when the French laid hold of Algeria.

They speak a jargon of their own. They are Mohammedan in faith, but not strict, for custom has sovereignty over the law of the Koran. The women are unveiled, and hold a higher place than Islam gives to females. There is no polygamy, but the Kabyle has no scruples in getting rid of a woman when she is scraggy and withered, and taking to himself another wife who is younger and plumper. The Arab is clean, but loves the wandering life of the tents on the desert, and is happiest when he is drowsing away hot hours within the shadow. The Kabyle is one of the dirtiest creatures on earth; he never washes. But he is patriotic, loves his village, and slaves from his boyhood to his burial.

Now, when the invaders came, some of them must have stayed and got merged in the Kabyle race. So there is no distinctiveness of feature. Some of

the people are as dark as those to the south of the Sahara ; others have the soft tones of Italy ; others are as fair-faced and blue-eyed as the Saxon. I met several red-whiskered Kabyles.

The Oriental woman is not always a thing of beauty ; but the Kabyle woman is famous for her looks. Both here, and down at the village of Ait Sidi Said, where I was this morning, I saw lovely creatures, corsetless and shoeless, picturesque but shy, and scurrying to their hovels, after having a peep at the stranger picking a way through the mire of their alleys. When I levelled my camera at them shrill-voiced shrieks sounded for the young girls, more curious, to come away. From cavernous huts came demands that little Ourdia and Bahia and Ferroudja should hide themselves, or evil would come from the glance of the foreigner.

The costumes were daring—red and yellow—always red and yellow. The jackets were of the reddest of red, and the skirts were of the yellowest of yellow. The women wore little skull-caps of red trimmed with yellow. From their ears hung circles of silver studded with coral. Heavy and barbaric silver and coral ornaments circled their necks. The jackets were all clasped with the same sort of brooch—a silver filigree triangle brooch the size of a small hand. Crude bands of silver jangled at the wrists and ankles. When a woman wore a coral-studded ornament in front of her little cap, that was a sign she was the mother of a male child.

Picture a frightened-eyed, lissom girl, soft-skinned and black-haired, arrayed in red and yellow, and at every movement making a jangle with her silver

and coral decorations, and you have a Kabyle girl standing before you.

The Kabyles are poor to starvation; but no Kabyle woman is too poor to own a mass of jewellery.

In the pant of this afternoon I sat just beyond the village, where a path dips towards a well, half a mile away. The light was warm and the air rare, and the shouts of tatter-shirted youngsters to the goats they were herding a mile off could be plainly heard. The path was cactus-bound—big-spiked, green, flatfish-like in stalk, crawling the sandy earth and rising and twisting fantastically; and the red-and yellow-skinned prickly pear—the hues a little softer than the garments of the women—were standing like gaudy blobs against the blue, blue of the sky—the real, unmistakable, genuine blue, with no grey in it such as you have in northern climes.

Groups of Kabyle women were fetching water. Their jars and jugs were quaint. Some were like enormous pumpkins painted chocolate, and these they carried on their heads. Most were long, graceful, slim-necked jars, with two square-topped but softly curving handles, Greek in design, but with yellow and black Etruscan designs on their chocolate surface. These were carried on the shoulder.

It was like a sheet ripped from an eastern story-book to see these flaming-garbed women down amongst the pale greens of luxuriant vegetation near the gurgle of the water, to hear their laughter, to see them swing their jars into position, and then, with bodies firm but limbs free and agile, start climbing to Taourit Beni Menguellet. But when the foreigner was spied they gave little calls of alarm, and with



arms raised to hide the face—the spontaneous action of the Moslem woman, who does not mind what other parts of her body you see—sidled up another path.

Then came Ariski, a big, crop-bearded Kabyle, who did not like me looking at the women of his village. He sat down beside me and wrapped his camel-hair burnous about him, and cried to the young women to go another way. He told me the young Kabyle woman was not to be trusted—though I thought I might have been. When a Kabyle woman forgets her virtue the whole village takes her to a waste spot on the mountain side. Then a grave is dug. The husband throws a stone at her. Everybody throws stones at her. When she is dead and mangled her body is thrown into the grave—and so good-night to pretty Eldja.

A Kabyle village, straddling a hill ridge, makes a pleasant picture when viewed from a distance. There is nothing pleasant on close inspection. The houses, built crooked, are of unbaked mud bricks, jutting inconsequentially into the narrow lane, which is rock-floored and vilely uneven. Sometimes there is a little courtyard and the askew door is carved with circles, saw-edged, and with parallel lines cut to join other circles in the lower part of the door. More often it is just a square hovel with neither window nor chimney. The door is large; the floor is of mud; a side panel, like a seat, is just a slab of mud. The place is dim to the eye when first entered. But soon you see things. In a corner is a woman weaving a carpet. The strings are hung from the roof to a beam near the floor, and this beam keeps the threads taut. She has no shuttle, but with fingers she works

the transverse strings in and out, and when the stretch is completed she presses it down with a flat-edged strip of wood.

On one side are several enormous jars, each of which could easily hold a man. In these are kept wheat and clothes and jewellery; they are the cupboards of the household. Chickens are pecking about the earthen floor. A mule is tethered in a dark part, a cow is behind a fence in another, and three goats are bleating in a recess. Everybody and everything lives or is kept in one chamber, family, animals, fowls. The stench is not appetising.

There are no schools. The Kabyle cannot read. He knows nothing whatever of the outside world. But he is industrious, and he spends his entire life scratching sustenance from these wild, inhospitable hills of the Djurdjura, into which he has been pressed by the invaders of northern Africa through tens of centuries. He can make vegetation grow where another man could rear nothing but red sand and pebbles. On a patch ten yards by twelve he can grow vegetables for himself, his wife and several children. He has no idea of collective property. Independence is one of his characteristics, and every man owns his own property. There is no sharing. One man may have the land and another man own the trees on it. Two individuals may own one tree; each has certain branches. The idea of several men reaping equally the produce of certain land is beyond the Kabyle. What is his must be his entirely. He is unique in the Mussulman world.

The Kabyles, though a separate race, have never been a nation in the matter of administration. Yet

now and then, such as when the French were striving to subdue the country, the tribes have confederated and fought the unwelcome strangers. The Kabyle's interests are confined to his village and the patch of earth which he nurtures. Each village is a little republic, absolutely autonomous.

My friend Ariski took me to the *djemaa*, or council chamber, of the village. There we were joined by Kabyles who, having finished their labours on their patches, came to talk with the foreigner. The *djemaa* was as bare as a barn, with a doorway but no door, and slabs of slate, rising in tiers, acted as seats. It was not unlike the interior of a common Russian bath. The old men, thin and emaciated, with skins wrinkled and loose, with eyes watery and teeth reduced to discoloured fangs, sat in their torn and grimy cloaks, and with foul but once crimson skull-caps on the backs of their heads, squatted cross-legged on the slabs. They were the elders of Taourit Beni Menguellet, and constituted the forum. Their chief, the *anim*, a sort of mayor, had been elected by popular favour, and approved by the French authorities, though this is little more than a formality. The *anim* rules; he is a kind of Pooh-Bah. But his power is only mandatory, and a meeting of the old men in the *djemaa* can upset his decrees.

The younger men, who stood about the doorway, and whom I had seen out on the hills gathering figs, and laying them out on basket screens to dry in the sun, were tall, and scorched to the colour of bronze. They were lithe and muscular. Their countenances were drawn, but in the glint of the eyes, the fulness of the nostrils, and the straightness

of the lips was proof of their valour of spirit. Like all hillmen, they are quarrelsome by nature. Villages are at enmity over bits of scarpd rock, and miniature wars, though not very bloody, are incessantly waged. There is hot passion between two Kabyles. A vendetta begins. It spreads from man and man to family and family, and then to village and village, and the fighting continues for years—long after the original dispute is forgotten.

One feels well out of the world here, looking over a medley of stubble-chinned hills and the higher wastes of mountains, which are khaki-clad. Kabyles, with oaths in their throats, are far down the winding, ribbon paths, and are whacking mules which, laden with brushwood, are jerkily picking a way over the rubble with which the track is strewn. A short distance away is a group of crouching women, their chins on their knees, resting beneath a *marabout* tree—a tree made holy because, long, long ago, a holy Mussulman was put to his rest beneath it. In a cleft of the hill, where a trickle of moisture oozes, is a wealth of electric blue thistles, and a stack of white foxgloves spear straight upwards. The dark green of the olive-trees contrasts with the light green of the fig-trees. Far up the opposite hill a roadway bulges like a nigger's lip.

Romance, fiction and fact hang over the land like a mist. The Kabyle will tell you, when speaking of the antiquity of his race, that long, long ago, when the Berbers lived in a distant land, a maiden of the people unfortunately, whilst a strange king was passing, exposed more of her body than was proper, owing to the wind blowing aside her attire. The

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE KALEIDOSCOPE OF TUNIS

I SAID it was garbage. My friend, being artistic, sniffed gently, and suggested the scent of jasmine—or geranium he added in a quick afterthought. Garlic: I held that the aroma was garlic. Yes, a little, flavoured with the perfume of the narcissus, said the artist. And seasoned with dead fish, said I. We compromised by agreeing that the odours of Tunis were Oriental.

In a photograph you get the whitewashed, tipsy picturesqueness of the East. You get the veiled damsels in baggy trousers. You see lethargic Moors lounging in front of cafés. But a photograph does not provide you with the thick, hot, reeking stench of the beautiful East. Not yet. Science, however, is progressive.

If you love fat women, come to Tunis.

Real fat, podgy, waddling, wobbling women—not ladies just inclined to stoutness.

The Tunisian—Moslem or Jew—likes bulk. He likes his wife to look like an overcharged balloon. He likes her to be so fat that she hobbles and rolls.

The Tunisian woman is Humpty-Dumpty and Daniel Lambert reincarnated as one person. No scraggy, angular, Gothic-framed females for the Tunisian! A beauty specialist who tried to sell



TYPICAL TUNISIAN JEWESSES  
*Photograph by Lehnert & Landrock, Tunis.*



anti-fat in Tunis would have her establishment wrecked for attempting to diminish the mammothian loveliness of the fat Fatmas of the land.

Any itinerant showmen, despondent about the circumference of their fat exhibits, can go to Tunis and hire a ship-load. Only a showman must not try to carry too many Tunisian women in one ship. They would sink the ship.

A Tunisian girl is slim like other girls. As she reaches the marriageable age she takes no exercise. She gorges on *kous-kous*, which is farinaceous and flesh-producing. The bigger and flabbier she is, the more like a prize-fed pig she becomes, the more lusciously alluring is she in the eyes of Hamid. The Tunisian when he marries does not want learning. An athletic, golfing, hockey-playing, tennis-whacking girl would be indecent. He likes nice eyes. But he must have fat.

Most Mohammedan ladies shield their charms of countenance with a soft white veil falling from just below the eyes. The female Moslem of Tunisia has her head swaddled in black. It is just as though, before she went forth to the *souk* to market, her husband tightly tied her head in a black bag, so tight that the bag split and she can peer through the slit.

The Jewish women of Tunis do not veil. But they knock the Mohammedan women sideways in rich raiment, in jewellery, and in fat. The young Tunisian Jewess is a vision of prettiness, but her mother—well, well! The Jewesses swaddle and waddle the same as their Moslem neighbours. They wear high-coned hats, just like the hat worn by the fairy godmother who appears out of the fireplace in



the pantomime, when Cinderella sits lamenting she cannot go to the ball. From the apex hang folds of gauzy, filmy white—rather effective.

Take note that Tunis has a population of a hundred thousand Mussulmans, fifty thousand Jews, seventeen thousand Italians and Maltese, and ten thousand French. I copied these figures out of a book.

The Englishman, when he goes to an Eastern clime, fits himself into his new surroundings. The Frenchman, never. He takes a bit of his beloved Paris with him. So he has made the European quarter of Tunis like a part of the gay city by the Seine. There is a fine Avenue de France, and an Avenue Jules Ferry—a broad boulevard, tree-girt, with palms throwing their fronds wide. The *magasins*, hotels and cafés are Parisian. Bands play; rubber-tired victorias are overtaken by dashing motor-cars; the electric tramway sings; the electric light flashes. In the cool of the evening, charmingly dressed Frenchwomen take promenades with their children.

The Frenchman sits in front of his favourite café, and sips absinthe or anisette, or *amer piquant* or cognac, or has bright-coloured syrups of grenadine or citron, or *framboise* or *groseille fantaisie*, or he keeps away the fever with vermouth or quinquina. Every other Frenchman you meet has a bit of ribbon in his buttonhole—a little tag of red, or green, edged with yellow, or mauve. They indicate that the wearers have been decorated for some service to the State. The number of Frenchmen who have done service to the State is legion.

They have no king to dub them knights, but they

love their little bits of ribbon. It is an amiable vanity. I sat at table with three Frenchmen, and they all wore ribbons. I did not like to ask what services they had done to the State.

Later on I was informed that, as I was a distinguished, etcetera, etcetera, writer, I could, by the judicious expenditure of forty-five francs, get a fine order from the Bey, which would entitle me to a little bit of ribbon in my buttonhole, and a scintillating decoration as large as a saucer—but this latter would be an extra, and would have to be bought at a jeweller's. I kept my forty-five francs.

In Tunis you hear more Italian spoken than French, more Hebrew than Italian, more Arabic than Hebrew, Italian and French put together.

The French look after the government, and run the big shops. The Jews, as usual, are in finance, and are all wealthy. The Italians, from Naples and Sicily, are the working classes. The Moslems are everything, rich and poor, and sell anything from camels to attar of roses.

Let us saunter through the *souks*, the market places of the natives.

Most of them are labyrinthine, whitewashed tunnels, with little holes at intervals in the roof, sufficient to let in some light, but not sufficient to let out much of the stink. Each way has its particular trade. All the shops are windowless, square alcoves in the wall. All the passages are thronged with the most multi-coloured, haggling, noisy throng imaginable.

It is hot; it is sweltering; it is foetid. The

pomegranate and date merchant sits dreamy-eyed, and mechanically sways a swish, like a horse's tail, to keep off the flies. The flies are fond of mutton, and the seller of sheep stands before his store and swings two swishes. Gluttonous little beasts, are these myriad millions of Tunisian flies! Why, even the Jewish money-lenders keep the swish going over their counters, fearing no doubt that the flies will gobble their pelf.

There is a mixture of garb, as though the populace had hurriedly dressed from the contents of a jumble-shop. The low-class, unshaven Italian is gesticulatory, collarless, has ill-fitting trousers, much stained, and boots that are never cleaned. The Jew is partly Arabic, partly European—and a fine mess he makes of it. He wears a low-crowned, claret-hued fez, which tickles the nape of his neck. His discoloured jacket once came from Europe. His trousers are Turkish, sagging, and particularly voluminous about the sitting part. His calves are bare, but he is wearing pointed French button-up boots, and his socks are kept in place with elastic suspenders. The town Tunisian dresses very much in the same way, except that, instead of a jacket, he wears a *gandoura*, a sort of overshirt, which does not come up to his neck at the top and fails to come down to his heels at the bottom.

There is a touch of effeminacy about the Tunisian. He likes the rays of the sun. Sometimes he wears the fez and sometimes the turban, generally of white enlaced with yellow; his *gandoura* may be of canary yellow, hemmed with sage green; or mauve with an edge of grey; or puce with black.

All the bright young bucks have bunches of jasmine bloom stuck over the ear. Some have delicate features and refined hands. They pick their way through the mire, and step on one side when a broad-shouldered, hairy-chested, brown-baked and tatter-clad Arab comes surging along with a bale of goods upon his back.

We take our way up the noisome, clamorous Rue de la Kasbah. The shops are busy. There are no fixed prices; all purchasing is done by squabbling. Up passages, looking from the gloom into a sea of eastern sunshine, are mosques, square-towered and radiant-tiled, or with slim, needle-like minarets. There are notices prohibiting the entrance of any dog or a Christian. There is the clang of hammers in the metal market. In the Souk Sekajine, saddlers are energetic, making high-pommelled yellow saddles and adorning them with ruby silks and threads of gold. A shout, and we skip aside, for a lad is running forward with little pots of thick coffee—a customer is to be entertained whilst he buys. Thud! thud! thud! and you are in the street of shoe-makers, yellow-leather shoes with the heel beaten down slouchwise. The fez-makers are pressing the red caps into shape. A tremendous rabble in the jewellery market—barbaric ornaments are being hawked. Sellers and buyers screech at one another. The deal finished, they go to a little government office, an official examines, and the purchaser can be satisfied there is no hanky-panky about the quality of the gold or the genuineness of the gems.

Here is the Souk-et-Trout, bright with silks. Round a corner, and we are in the Souk des Femmes.

Fat women—hundreds of fat women—shrouded in white, and the Moslem women with their heads in tight black bags, fingering the fineries dear to their heart.

The Bey, with his ladies, is at Marsa—a white heap of garden-embowered residences on the fringe of Tunis Bay, just beyond the crumbled heaps of stones which tell where glorious Carthage was. So there is no trouble in visiting the Dar-el-Bey, the town palace of His Highness.

No gorgeousness from without. The outer walls are as simple as the walls of a stable. That is where the poetry comes in—the blank, silent wall and the mind dancing in wonder concerning things that happen beyond, in the scented courts of a great pasha.

The picture is of a bulbous-paunched and rheum-eyed old reprobate, lounging on silken cushions, sucking a long-tubed water-pipe, and watching dusky maidens in diaphanous attire dancing on the rare carpets which decorate the marble. Musicians play lusciously. The waters of the fountain fall rhythmically. The sunshine is like a bath of warmth. The snow-cooled sherbet is the most exquisite beverage. It must be a grand thing to be a rich Bey. That is the picture.

And yet, allowing for the mystic charm of life in a land where it is constant afternoon, I ventured the thought that life was rather boresome within these marbled and fantastic Moorish halls. It must have been particularly boresome to the stout ladies who never went to the opera, nor the theatre, nor the

races, nor picnicked, nor dined at restaurants, nor sat outside cafés and chatted with their husband's friends.

Through square-set doors, crowned with black and white marble, I passed from marble court to marble court. The sun blazed from the bluest of skies—but a soft coolness prevailed. No houris were there to trip in dance; only a smoke-soaked old Arab, who knew one word of English and three words of French, and who, I was well aware, was interested in the baksheesh he was likely to receive.

The arches are Moorish, lovely curves, prolongation of the horns of the moon. All the stones are white and black marble. The heavy doors are carved. The apartments are dim, shaded, ornate. The corridors are breasted with tiles—rare old tiles—the making of which is a lost art. The colouring is gentle though the patterns be crude, and you find yellow Arabic tiles, black Spanish tiles, brilliant Italian tiles. White marble pillars, with delicate cornice tracery, give dignity to court and hall—pillagings from the buried city of the Carthaginians. The roofs are arched; the colouring is red and green, with the cuttings inlaid with gold. What looks like a lace scarf runs dado-wise near the roof—it is *nuksh-hadida*, arabesque plaster-work. The furniture is shoddy—gold and plush.

Even in the throne-room, with a big gold and plush arm-chair as throne, the Eastern flavour of the scene is spoilt with a hideous European carpet. The floors are in mosaic. If you are in the mood you can weave all kinds of pretty Oriental stories about life in the

palace of the Bey. But you had better keep your eye shut to the shoddiness.

To your carriage. The Arab driver whips up the horses, and off you go, jolting over dusty roads through the Bab-Saadoun and thence to Bardo, one of the exquisite palaces of the Bey. It is white and peaceful, and seems to nestle amongst the luxuriant vegetation of an Arabian Night's dream.

Marble courts and marble courts, all white and black marble. Carved doors lead into dim chambers. The shadowy galleries are upheld by pillars of white marble. The decorations are accentuated, chiefly green and gold; there is much stucco frescoing; there are gaudy carpets, shoddy clocks. The justice hall is a place of beauty, especially the avenue of white marble pillars. The audience-chamber and the throne-room—what with gimcrack candelabra and yellow silk cushions on the settees, bought in the worst period of the nineteenth century—are showy.

How is it that the people here lost their distinctive art when they came in contact with Europeans? Yet Tunis is not Arabian. It is really Turkish. And the Turk knows as little about art as a cow knows about geometry.

It was in what is called the "low" quarter of Tunis. The folk were of the mongrel type you find on the African coast—a mixture of Arab, Greek, Italian, Turk and Maltese. Features were coarse and skins were blotchy brown-black, and lips were lecherous and eyes sensual. The men looked ruffians, and the shapeless women were slatterns. It was a

place where the waters of the Mediterranean had cast up the human scum of centuries.

Pirates, warriors, slaves, desperadoes, outcasts, the drift of many lands—who were their sires, and whence did their mothers come ?

They were drinking deeply and laughing loudly in that hot, steamy room. A great, bull-like man, in the baggy trousers of the East, his shirt loose, and showing a knotted throat—a man whose skin had no colour in it but the sallowness of many races, whose eyes were black and blood-streaked, whose hair was crispy like that of the Numidian, and whose beard was short-cropped, the man I would select as a real specimen of the Barbary pirate—brought the drinks and the coffee and the hubble-bubble water-pipes.

The air is putrid. A Jew-faced man is hammering at a piano. A Turk-bellied individual is scratching a violin between his knees. A sickly-faced, smudge-eyed Maltese, dressed like a Moor, is rattling his fingers against a tom-tom. An old man spasmodically shakes a tambourine. They are playing an Oriental air.

Six women are on a platform, and they are shrieking in song—and much of it is like the cry of agony they would give if red-hot hatpins were being stuck into their flesh.

They are disgustingly plump—no, fat is the word. They are in reds and greens and golds, and their coin-decked caps are bright, and their great trousers of startling stripes are like caricatures of sailors' belongings. From the top of the trousers to the breast, the thinnest of flesh-tinted covering. You may see the folds of the fat.



The men leer at the fat women, and the women, who are sweating profusely, show their teeth and catch cigarettes thrown at them.

The din of the music crashes, and the women shake their finery and throw back their heads and howl.

A tall, heavy-featured woman rises. She stands, sullen, with arms akimbo, like an athlete showing his form. Her body is still, but her breasts quiver and her jewellery tinkles. Then she dances—a shuffle. Then she writhes her body. It is an orgy of suggestiveness.

But it is the dance of the East. It is the dance of the pasha's harem ; it is the dance of the disreputable café ; it is the dance which every little Arab girl tries to learn—long years before she knows its meaning.

The scum men of the Orient, from anæmic pale-face to thick-lipped, ebony negro, lean forward. With drowsy, bleary eyes they watch the woman. They are not enthusiastic. They never applaud. They drink and smoke and spit, and keep their eyes on the lewd posturing of the dancer.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE SOUK-EL-ATTARINE

MOHAMMED SADOK ANOUN bade us be seated. He sat straddle-legged in the very centre of his shop. It was a tiny shop, about the square of a restaurant table for four, and he could reach every article in it with his long, thin hands, which had henna on the nails, though the yellow stain suggested he smoked too many cigarettes. He was a good Moslem, and he wore a long, loose *gandoura* of sage green, and his turban was white, with strands of gold. He was pale, alabaster-cheeked, but his manners were soft, and his actions had the languor of the Orient.

The air was a dainty blend of many flowers. For this was the Souk-el-Attarine (the Street of Perfumes), in the Arab quarter of Tunis. All the shops sold the essence of sweet flowers. The Souk was dark and cool, but hot sunshine poured through one of the gates, and the warmth mingled with the fragrance. The dealers were sitting in their shops, and about them were many bottles of distilled blooms, quaint-shaped bottles with Arabic inscriptions, and silk sachets of dried leaves, and candles of multi-hued wax. Arabs, in the radiant attire which the Tunisian loves, were sauntering through the street, and bulky, white-draped and black-veiled women were hobbling along.

Two daughters of Islam were on the step which was all of shop-floor that the *maison* of Mohammed Sadok Anoun had. Beautiful, of course. All veiled women of the Orient are beautiful, because they are romantic, mysterious, unseeable. These Arab ladies might have had sallow complexions and puckered foreheads; but the veil was a curtain, and it suited my mood to think they were as lovely as the houris of Paradise. They called each other "Guelbi" (Heart of Mine), and "Kreira" (the Pearl)—which was pretty, and satisfied us they were young. Their hands were soft. So were their voices. They bought kohl, dark pigment to make their eyebrows arch like the moon—I stole that simile from an Arab love-song—and to pencil their eyelashes and make more sparkling their eyes, which I am sure were ravishing.

Then they bought scent. Pearl put out her plump little hand and stretched her arm, which had the down of the peach upon it, and Mohammed touched the warm flesh with the stopper of his jasmine bottle. It was exquisite. A thousand petals—escaping like good genii from a story in the Thousand Nights Entertainment—breathed all the charm of jasmine.

"A soul-dissolving odour, to invite  
To some more lovely mystery,"

though Kreira probably never heard of Shelley. But Heart of Mine demanded musk. So she was a saintly little woman was Guelbi; else why did she demand musk? The Prophet liked musk; he believed it was pleasing to Allah. Did not Moses, dissatisfied with his own breath, wash his mouth with musk, and the angels tell him his breath had

spoil the scent of musk and he must fast ten days ? Read your Koran, and note that the epistle which Solomon sent to the Queen of Sheba was scented with musk, and was dropped into the Queen's bosom by a lapwing. Truly, Heart of Mine must be a devout maiden and repeat her prayers every night—though the Moslems do say that women have no souls. And the Prophet used to say, "The two things I love best in all the world are women and perfumes."

When Krcira and Guelbi waddled away, Mohammed Sadok Anoun was prepared to be the humble slave of messieurs. The scents of Tunisia we want, the most delicate aromas of flowers, grown in the gardens of Nabeul, and nurtured under sensuous breezes from the Gulf d'Hammet. No adulterated essence, no artificial perfumes, but the very heart of the flowers. The scents are for London—grimy, foggy, far away—to touch the dresses of women before going to the dance, to fill the boudoir with their languorous, pungent odours and provoke thoughts of Tunisia. Did he understand ?

Mohammed's pale countenance was suffused with a smile. He outstretched his hand with the long, lean fingers. His store was at our service.

Slowly he ran his eye over his jumble of phials—like many shelves in a medicine-cupboard. He has the *essence orientale du harem de geranium rosa d'œillet sauvage*. He picked down the bottle as though he were a collector about to show one of his most precious possessions. He held it up towards the sunlit gate, tilted it, extracted the stopper, gave each of us a little on the sleeve. Then he leaned back, and an

expectant look came into his eyes. Eh! What thought we of that? Did our senses reel? Was there not poetry in the air? Was ever harem more inviting than when this scent hung heavy in the curtained apartments? Saxon-like, we said it was "pretty strong."

Ah! the lilac, then; so gentle, so insinuating, a whisper of a scent! Or the iris, like a breath of beauty! Now, mark you, this was very rare—ambergris! Had we ever played with amber beads, and, when the warmth of the hand drew their virtue, had we bent over and drunk in the evasive yet captivating smell? Just a drop on the sleeve, messieurs. There! Or geranium, which suggested repose? Or the scent of the sandal-tree; have it near, and there would float in the mind thoughts of warm afternoons spent reclining in groves on the edge of the great desert, and the vision would come when we were thousands of miles away.

Jasmine, we requested. Ah, yes! He had the finest jasmine in all the Souk-el-Attarine. Jasmine is the bloom which the rich young Arabs of Tunisia carry in the ear. Jasmine is the flower which the Arab girls play with when idling on the house-tops in the haze of the day, dreaming of their husbands that are to be. "The back of your hands, messieurs. Less than a drop. Is it not delightful?"

Yes, delightful. And how much for twenty francs? He held up a diminutive, flowered bottle. What, only so much? Not so much; it must be weighed, and the bottle would not be full. Well, make it up. He clasped his hands, swung his body forward in obeisance, and gave thanks.

He produced a small mahogany case. It contained scales, such as chemists use when weighing costly drugs. He placed the bottle in one scale and then he put weights and a nail, a bit of cork, and a bit of screwed-up paper, till he had the correct balance with the bottle. In the opposing scale to the bottle he put a weight, a tiny brass ball, to represent the value of twenty francs' worth of jasmine perfume. How very cautiously he poured the scent into the bottle! How often he held up the strings of the scale to make sure he was not giving too much! Now the bottle sagged. Too much! So he poured a few drops back again. Now, too little. He poured a couple of drops into the bottle. Exact! He held up the scales to show how even they were.

A little drawer was pulled out and a cork selected. But he also found a glass stopper; that will be for use at home. Another drawer was opened, and he brought forth a cake of wax. A candle was lit and he held the wax before the flare till it was plastic. He squeezed a hood round the cork and the bottle-neck, so that the scent should not evaporate. Another drawer, and from it was produced a tin cylinder and the bottle was packed in cotton-wool. After that the cylinder was carefully rolled in paper and the ends fastened with sealing-wax.

It took Mohammed ten minutes to do all this. He did everything deliberately and leisurely. Tunis is a city of plenty of time. He bowed again, just as Moslems bow when entering the mosque.

But we want more scent? The orange-flower—that is dainty. The verveine; how soothing and refreshing; madame will be pleased. The heliotrope

—"the back of your hands, messieurs, just half a drop"—oh! the deliciousness of the heliotrope. A little bottle. Essence of apple is the sweetness of the early morning, essence of pear for the hushful afternoon, drowsy carnation to play with the senses in the early night.

He has many scents—the citron, the bergamotte, the opoponau, the miel, the benjoin. "Your hands, messieurs! The sleeve of your coat! The lapel of your coat!"

It is all confusing. Aroma mixes with aroma. The nostrils get tired of discriminating. Well, a small bottle of benjoin. Excellent choice; he could recommend it. Distinguished foreign ladies always liked it.

Messieurs were good judges of scents. Their taste was refined. They had been good to buy so much. And there was a madame—in England? He would like to see England. A present, a little bottle of essence of violet for madame; no, really a present. Mohammed Sadok Anoun was proud of his perfumes.

We put our purchases in our pockets. Mohammed bowed and muttered in Arabic, "Blessings be upon thee, and upon thee blessings."

The atmosphere of the Souk was heavy and humid with the blend of many aromas. Swarthy Tunisians were spending dilatory hours making their choice at the shops. Dealers bowed to us: maybe one day we would buy from them. Bundles of white mystery, women in couples, stood before the attar bottles, and talked to each other about their favourite flowers. Through the Souk were wandering *bekkhar*

(mendicants), who wafted burning incense before passers-by, and received alms in return. It was all dreamy and luscious, and fantastic and Eastern. And when we went out into the sunshine the warm fresh air was very good to breathe.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE HOLY CITY OF AFRICA

ALI HASSAN said I ought to see the Aissiouas, but was sure I would be sick if I did. Still, as I was in Kairouan, the holiest Mussulman city in all Africa, it would be a pity if I failed. The ceremony took place regularly every Friday evening at sundown in the *zaouia* (monastery), just outside the Gate of Djelladin. Friday was impossible. He knew the head of the sect, and a service could be arranged. So be it.

The Aissiouas are strict Moslems and followers of Aissa, a Moroccan, who taught that the surest way to please Allah, reach the realms of bliss, and pass eternity with the most beautiful houris, was by self-torture on earth.

It was the hot hour of the day, and the white walls of Kairouan reflected heat in the eyes like the glow of a mirror. It was a dead, dry heat, and each breath was like drawing flame into the lungs. Ali Hassan smiled when I panted. He wore a *gandoura*, a long shirt of red wine hue edged with green. Black hairs stubbled his chin, and I inquired why he had not shaved. He told me Mohammedans did not cut the beard for forty days after the death of a relative, and it was eleven days since his sister was laid to rest amongst the sand outside the walls of Kairouan.

It was so hot that the way was nigh deserted. An old woman, with her leathern and wrinkled cheeks ill-concealed by the *haik* which was drawn over the head, led a decrepit old man, who whined, and with his fingers pulled down the skin to show the red sockets where eyes had once been. A gift to the blind would be marked to my credit by the good Allah.

A camel came with a rhythmic swing along the sandy road—a slow pace, heedless of time. On the hump was a bundle of black cloth. Between the folds I saw a face, yellow-ashen, cadaverous, with eyes sunken and dull. Saliva was dripping from bleached lips.

“Yes,” said Ali Hassan, “when a Moslem is like to die he travels many days so that he may breathe his last in Kairouan, for the Koran says that he who dies in a holy city goes to Paradise at once.”

There was the soft pat of a drum and the wail of a pipe. Here was the *zaouia*, and at the door the head-man met me. He was big and sallow, and bearded and turbaned, and his right eye looked as though it had been seared with a poker. Across a little courtyard and then into a half-open chamber. There was a stone seat, mat-spread on the farther side, and I sat down.

Soft-hued carpets were strewn on the floor, and on the carpets were sitting men in the costume of the Orient. They were all brown-skinned, and they were singing in a minor key to the thump of the hand-drum and the plaintive cry of the pipe. They were pale beneath their brownness. Their cheeks were hollow, and their lips were blue; their eyes glistened

throttle of his neck, pushed the dagger through, and then, with capering and grimace, he danced round. He made horrible noises, as though he were being strangled.

*"Hu !-Hu ! Hu !-Hu !"*

A boy squatted, and began munching pieces of jagged glass. At each gulp he pressed to the ground in agony.

A short, thick-set fellow came forward with a cactus leaf, green, the size of a flatfish, with spines as long and as hard as needles. He ate as though hungry.

Blood ran from belly, shoulders, throat and mouth.

*"Hu !-Hu ! Hu !-Hu !"* It was an orgy of fanaticism.

"For God's sake, Ali Hassan, stop this bloody business !" I cried.

I felt I would vomit. I staggered from the hall out into the white sunshine.

And there was the old man, pulling down with finger and thumb the raw red of his eyeless sockets, and whining that Allah would reward those who were charitable to the blind.

Ali Hassan knew every corner of this walled holy city of the desert. The walls are so thick that a road, along which a carriage might be driven, could be made on them. The parapets, with their niches, are domed ; the gates of the city, double, and with a sharp turn, so that if the invader rammed the first iron-studded, heavy-beamed gate, he would be wedged in a tight passage, easily attacked from above, whilst battering at the second gate.

Kairouan stands on vast, featureless desert—as far as eye can range nothing but desert—a white-walled city with white houses and the domes of twenty-three mosques and ninety *zaouias* showing clear against the sky.

It was Okba-ben-Napy, Sidi Okba, who lies buried in the desert near Biskra, in Algeria, who, in the fiftieth year of the Mohammedan Hegira, came from Arabia and conquered all North Africa to Islamism. With a band of Arab tribesmen he slashed the conquering sword from Egypt to Morocco, and there he rode his horse into the waters of the Atlantic and mourned his task was done.

He founded Kairouan. It was to be the centre of African Islamism for ever. Seven pilgrimages to Kairouan were to be equal to one to Mecca.

Now, when the French spread their hands over Tunisia, there was capitulation, but the terms were that no Christians should ever desecrate the mosques by their presence. Kairouan, however, was stout-hearted and resisted. So Kairouan had to be subdued by the sword. To mark the subjection of the holy city, Christians were to be allowed to enter her mosques. At first they removed their boots and wore slippers. But now that has fallen into abeyance. The Christian can walk about the mosques in his boots; the one thing he must not do is to tread upon the prayer mats.

It was not a happy day. The sirocco was blowing—a hot but lifeless wind from the south. The air was impregnated with sand, so that, whilst the light was strong, there was no shadow. A strange, uncanny, bright murkiness hung between the sun and the earth.

The bazaars (*souks*) were fantastically Oriental—for Kairouan is too far away for the West to have tampered with the distinctiveness of the Orient; and beyond the Bab (gate), which looks across the plains Tunis-wards, is the Souk-el-Berrani (the Market of the Strangers), where the black people from the south dance, and where snake-charmers show their skill.

With the play of Eastern gorgeousness about us, we wended the zig-zag streets of the white city. A push at a stunted and creaking doorway, and we were in the *zaouia* of Sidi Abib-el-Ghariani. It was cool to rest in the tiled passages where the poor, when they have nowhere else to sleep, might come and rest. The courtyard was decorated with many-tinted tiles. Very crude would these tiles look if placed in a European setting, but though the glazing is bubbled and the colours run, these subdued blues and greens are effective where they are. Little marble pillars—pillagings, I doubt not, from some forgotten town of the Roman occupation—and moon arches of alternative joists of white marble—you can trace this Moorish design all across Africa into Spain itself—and a little shaded gallery roofed in blue, make the resting-place of Sidi Abib very peaceful. He was a holy man, and though his direct descendants have ended, his family still resides here, and one of their number is the hereditary Governor of Kairouan.

The holy city was peaceful.

There was the business of the marts. But one day is like unto another day, and so, with no worries about the far-off outside world, the years turn, and eternity is linked with eternity in days of small

account. There are the prayers, five times a day, in the white mosques, which, over their portals, have the legend in ancient Arabic that there is no God but one God, and Mohammed is his Prophet. There are shady spots where the Arab lounges against marble pillars, Græco-Roman—also pilferings, I am sure, from the departed Romans.

The *souks* are long passages, with arches black-and white-washed—imitating the decorations of the mosques. There is the quiet chatter of dignified Arabs squatting before the stores. There is the rancid smell of the cook-shops, and the sweet smell from shops where honey-cakes are sold. I hear a thud, and sniff the odour of coffee. In a small and darkened chamber, and squatting, stripped to the waist, and snuff-powdered with the dust, an Arab is pounding coffee. His mortar is the beflowered head of a Greek column. Near twenty centuries ago it may have adorned the entrance to a Roman temple—and now it is used for pounding coffee!

Arab women, black-shrouded, move silently about. They do not veil like Moslem women elsewhere; the *haik* hangs over the head like a shawl, and it is pulled across the face so that the passer may not see. Just as in Spain you see decorations which have been left by the Moors, so I think, in the graceful mantilla worn by the Spanish lady in Seville, you see a distant cousin of the *haik* which the ladies wear in the first-founded Moorish city in North Africa.

Here is the Djama Tleta Biban, the Mosque of the Three Doors—long, carved, aged, eaten doors with Cufic scroll above. One of the old men, waiting to die, was crouching with his chin on his knees, and his

lean fingers idly trickling dust. The hot wind was blowing little heaps of dust to him. He muttered a prayer. The day was a mixture of heat, dust, languor and prayer. Into my heart crept a little envy of the serene, unemotional Mussulman.

And here the Djama Kebir, the Great Mosque—grandly simple. A Moor, in a long blue frock, slithered his heelless slippers over the stones of the courtyard, put large keys into antique locks, gave a wrench, opened the way to the dusky interior, and moved forward quickly, half turning the prayer-mats so that my boots did not pollute them.

There is a tower of greyish brick, topped with tiles, and the curve of a white dome, the point which the pilgrim sees first when making the sacred journey, and his eyes are strained across the sands for a glimpse of the holy city. Round the courtyard run cloisters, upheld by marble pillars—again all Roman, and the spoil of some nigh-forgotten, half-buried Roman city which flourished when the Romans were turning North Africa into a colony, centuries before the coming of the Arabs.

As solemn as a gloom-draped cathedral was the *maksoura*, the prayer-chamber. All wooden windows were closed, to shutter both heat and light; but light followed through the open doorway, and filtered through stained glass far overhead. It looked low-roofed, so enormous was it. It was all arches and pillars, the arches Moorish, the pillars more relics of Rome. Ali Hassan, who knows all things about Kairouan, said there are seventeen naves of eight arches each, and that the whole rests on two hundred and ninety-six marble and porphyry pillars. These

pillars are nearly forty feet high, but they do not look it. The marbles are white and grey and green and red. In a corner are three pillars, close together, much polished shoulder-high, and indeed well worn. "If you have rheumatism and you can press between these pillars you are cured," said Ali Hassan, who is a good Moslem and believed these things, though he did not expect a Christian to do so.

All the pillars have the leafy, Greek acanthus decoration, and one is twisted just as the leaves would be twisted in a gust of wind—a little frolic on the part of a sculptor dead and gone these twenty hundred years.

The eye gradually pierced the dimness, and far up was delicate tracery—in marble it appeared; but Ali Hassan said it was only stucco and modern. Great ringed candelabra swung from the roof; each had innumerable green glass cups, where lights flame on feast nights. They reminded me of the green, candle-holding glass cups much in evidence when gardens at home are illuminated in the dusk.

In the walls are mosaics of lapis-lazuli. The sacristy, with its cedar-wood screen of Moorish netted pattern, is quaint but needs dusting. The *mihrab*, the niche which points to Mecca, is a piece of scooped marble with fantastic carvings. Close by is the *mimbar*, a series of flanked steps ending in a pulpit. How delicate, how exquisite is the cutting, every panel different! It is all fastened with little brass grips. It is Indian in workmanship. Ali Hassan told how it was got by a devout Persian. He wrapped each piece carefully, and for two years travelled across the salt plains of Persia, across



Arabia, across Egypt, across Barbary, and set it up here in the holy city so that the truths of the Koran might be expounded from it.

A dreamy, drowsy city is Kairouan. Its walls were built for a much larger city than it is, and there are broad, sand-swept stretches between the high battlements and the white houses all huddled together as though seeking the shade of each other.

In the centre of the city, a group of white-robed men loll and smoke round the sacred well, El Barota, the waters of which are icy chill, and venerated because all Mussulmans believe they are in communication with those of Zem-zem at Mecca.

Through doorways a peep of women throwing the shuttle may be seen, for Kairouan is famous for its carpets. I admired a carpet. So I sat down and the seller brought me a little cup of thick, sugary coffee. He haggled and I went away. But I was called back, and we haggled again. At last I bought the carpet.

Out by one of the massive gates, amid much dodging of camels and stubborn bullocks.

Nothing but a sad sea of sand, broken by waves of the villainous cactus. The heat has been harsh, for though the cactus, like the camel, needs little water, there has been no rain for many months, and the cactus shrubs are withered and sapless, bent and burnt.

Yonder is a recumbent and broken pillar of red marble, the Blood-Red Column. What mammoth men of the hazy past brought it here? How did they raise it? Who fashioned it? What did it signify? Neither you nor I could tell. Ali Hassan knew.

Long, long ago, there was a wicked woman who raised a rebellion. She marched to Kairouan intending to kill all therein; but Allah turned her into a pillar of red marble. Somebody once cut the marble and a rush of blood was the consequence. Now it is a spot of pilgrimage, and Moslems come here to pray and light candles; but for what particular reason even Ali Hassan did not say.

Beyond the town, a bunch of white architecture, was the Mosque of the Barber. Ali Hassan did not like me calling it the Mosque of the Barber. Abou-Zemaa-el-Beloui, buried here, was not the Prophet's barber; he was one of the Prophet's companions. True he carried with him three hairs of Mohammed's beard, one next his heart, one under his tongue, one on his right arm; but that did not make him a barber.

It is a beautiful mosque, gloriously white. But it was locked, and we must sit and make cigarettes whilst the custodian was brought from the town. He hurried up, breathless and apologetic.

It is a feast of pillars and shady courts and arabesque carvings. Soft shades of green are in the tile work. The pillars, just as usual, are Græco-Roman. The doorway is Italian Renaissance. The tomb of the saint is a mass of green and red silk. The carpets are old, and subdued in tone. A cluster of green flags drape the head of the tomb. Around it are hung ostrich-eggs, and gleaming glass balls of blue and yellow, and little sacks of earth from Mecca. A glint of sunshine beat upon the piled-up magnificence, and a moth flitted about. "Arabs believe that moths are the souls of the dead," said Ali Hassan.

In times far, far away, a fabulously rich Indian prince came to Kairouan. He had many camels laden with precious things. He went to a holy man and asked what he should do with his wealth. "Sleep to-night," said the holy man, "and in your dream you will see the place where lies Abou-Zemaa-el-Beloui, the friend of Mohammed. When day comes, go there and dig, and you will find the body. Then, with your wealth, build the most beautiful mosque in Africa." And it was all just so. In a corner, in a red-ochreish box, lies the Indian prince who built the mosque.

To the Mosque of the Swords, easily distinguished by its six fluted domes. The Mosque of the Swords is so-called because it is dedicated to Sidi Amor-Abada, a *marabout*, the last professional holy man in Kairouan. He had the gift of prophecy, and he made swords and pipes and covered them with prophetic inscriptions. The door is salmon-coloured, and is encrusted with ironwork, representing bunches of grapes, and to these are fastened tufts of rags, showing that the faithful have been here and made some request to the spirit of the saint. Alas! the door was locked, and there was no response to our beating. The guardian was at a coffee-house not far off, and he was brought—a huge, negro-faced, grey-bearded, lymphatic old fellow, who jangled enormous keys.

The interior of the mosque was dingy. There was the tomb, and over it fanned orange and green banners. There was a heavy iron sword, and on it an Arabic inscription. I could hardly lift the sword. A great slab hung over the coffin, and on it were predictions by Sidi Amor-Abada. By the walls

reared other great slabs with other predictions. He foretold the occupation of Tunisia by the French. In one corner, a maze of much-painted fretwork, was the tomb of the favourite slave of Sidi Amor-Abada, and in another corner, just a slab of white marble, was the burial-place of his daughter. Cannon balls and old cannon lay about.

Sidi Amor-Abada was very rich. The Bey of Tunis wanted money. He took all that Sidi Amor-Abada had. But Sidi Amor-Abada told that the Bey would die within three years. He did. Now, amongst the wonderful things narrated to me by Ali Hassan was that Sidi Amor-Abada told the Bey to dig in a salt marsh north of Tunis and he would find four anchors. They were found, and they were brought to Kairouan. I saw them; they were each fifteen feet long and tremendously weighty and cumbersome. As long as they lay at Kairouan the city would be protected from all evil. "Time will prove," said Ali Hassan quietly.

I liked the stories of Ali Hassan as we walked the lanes of Kairouan. The heat was oppressive, and the hot sirocco dust whirled in clouds. There was the torment of myriads of flies.

"Ah!" said Ali Hassan, "they were ten times worse last week; but Allah sent the sirocco and that has killed most of them."

Night was falling when I left Kairouan and travelled across the desert. Night came with ruddy anger. I looked back and saw the white city of mosques soften into grey. The hot wind never ceased beating me on the cheek.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THINGS ABOUT TUNISIA

IN colloquial language it may be said that the French have Tunisia "in their pockets."

The French went to Tunisia to secure law and order because the country was in turmoil, the administration corrupt, and Europeans ill-treated. After whipping the evil-doers, they compelled the Bey of Tunis to accept a French Protectorate. The Bey growled, writhed, and agreed. Technically, the French will leave Tunisia whenever, in the minds of the French, Tunisia is qualified to look after itself. That state of mind will never be reached. France is in Tunisia to stay.

The Bey is a puppet. He lives in a radiant palace at Marsa, and receives something approaching £40,000 a year. All official acts are done in his name, because he signs the documents, and he signs whatever documents are placed before him by the French Governor-General. On certain days of the month he drives into Tunis and holds a pantomime Court. The Tunisians regard him as their king, and he is profuse in the distribution of cheap orders. But he has less power than the youngest secretary in the bureau of administration.

The French rule Tunisia with an iron hand—and rule it well. They have improved the finances of the

country. The officials are capable men. But there are very few Frenchmen in Tunisia besides the officials, and there are not likely to be. Tunisia cannot become a colony in the sense that it will be developed by colonists from France. Italians and Maltese are the people who are settling and are getting the benefit of French over-lordship.

Before the French came, the finances of the country—affected with the rotten paralysis which creeps over everything Turkish, and the Beys have been Turks and not Arabs—were in a disastrous condition. The French have done well in putting them straight; but at a big price.

The French are hated. There need be no mistake about that. In the southern regions there is seething revolt amongst the kuids, the little lords of the country, who find their power dwindling, who have their pride pricked by being compelled to obey the orders of French subalterns, who were squeezed by the Beys in the old times, but recouped themselves in the truly Oriental fashion by squeezing everybody else within their range. The native peasantry are full of discontent. True, the kuids ill-treated them, and judgment went to the stronger, and they suffered from corruption and were corrupt. It was, however, all in accordance with immemorial practice, and they accepted it as they accept thirst and the desert, as a perfectly natural condition of things. But these French—why, they impose a poll-tax of twenty francs on every person! That, to a Tunisian peasant, represents nearly three months' earnings. Every peasant must give three days' work each year in mending the roads in his district. Everything is

taxed, even the little garden in which the Tunisian takes his siesta in the middle of the day. Of course, the French can point to justice in administration, fair dealing, the building of railways and the construction of good roads. These are things which are satisfying to the European, but they are not at all satisfying to the Tunisian who has to bear the burden, and whose back nearly cracks with the load. If given his choice, he would have a return to the bad old ways.

Quite a little country is Tunisia, and full of interest. The natives do not move about much, and in different parts they present different characteristics. On the north coast they are often fair in complexion, as fair as Italians. Then, on the plains, is the Arab type, semitic, with refined lips and dreamy eyes. South, are Numidians, dark and coarse of feature. Amongst the hills are swarthy folk, partly negro, and partly Moor. In the bigger towns the native breed is usually bastard in race.

The visitor, when he arrives, has his ears filled with stories of danger in travelling among the natives. I experienced none of the danger. Sometimes the peasants live in tents, but mostly they dwell in the *gurbî*, which is a sort of rush-made shed, not quite a tent and not quite a house, but something between the two. That they are sluggish, without ambition, but wander through life content with enough for the day—except when the tax collector comes along—goes without saying. The costumes are more picturesque than inviting, gaudy cottons fastened with barbaric jewellery and worn until they fall off in tatters. In the oases—and

Tunisia is blessed with the quality of the curate's egg, "it is excellent in parts"—garments of brown wool are usual. Here the people have ramshackle, drunken, stone houses. Most people work in the palm groves and eat dog-flesh; in some of the towns all the women weave carpets, whilst in others they all make blankets.

Down south are the cave-dwellers. It is rather strange that so few people visit the region of the troglodytes, especially as they can be reached by motor-car.

Whole villages consist of nothing but holes cut in the face of the rocks, and these are approached by jutting stones, which serve as ladders. At Medenine are houses built after the manner of the cave-dwellers, houses built on houses, like great drain-pipes, made of stone with rounded tops, with a low entrance left at one end. The houses are really cells, and entrance can only be obtained by clambering up the outer wall by means of a rope or projecting stones or pieces of wood. Many of these buildings are hundreds of years old. At Medenine some twenty of them are set back to back, which are ceasing to be used as habitations but utilised as granaries. At places like Matmata and Zmertem, the natives have abandoned the hills, into which they scooped to make dwelling-places, for the humpy ground at the foot of the hills. They have dwelling-places, called *ghars*, the most curious of houses. They go to a big mound where the soil is firm, and on the top proceed to dig a kind of well about twenty feet deep and twenty feet across. The bottom is flattened and is a sort of open courtyard. In the



walls are cut living rooms and store-houses, some on the bottom level, some higher up the aperture, and reached by ropes. The floor of the open yard is generally on a level with the bottom of the mound, and a passage is cut through to the outside. That is a quaint kind of house. But it is not a prehistoric cave-dwelling. The *ghar* is a comparatively modern invention, following upon the abandonment of the real cave-dwelling, when the natives felt they could live on the low ground and be free from attack by warrior tribes, and be able to follow their agricultural pursuits in the valleys. The mound-houses are roomy and comfortable, and the beds and seats are fashioned from the earth itself. One of these villages, at the shortest of distances, can scarcely be recognised; it looks like a hillocky bit of country.

On the coast—as at Sfax, where there are more green turbans than white—there is a jumble of tongues. Esperanto is nothing of a language to Sabir. As far as can be made out, it is composed of five Spanish, four Italian and six French words, and so Sabir becomes “the idiom common to the Arab who thinks he can talk French and the Frenchman who imagines he is talking Arabic.”

Constantly in my wanderings I met the White Fathers, who owe their origin to Cardinal Lavigerie. Lavigerie, “the apostle of Africa in the nineteenth century,” has been compared with Xavier, the apostle of the Indies. When Bishop of Nancy, he was offered, through Marshal MacMahon, then Governor-General of Algeria, the Archbishopric of Algiers. So, some half a century ago, he accepted. Cholera and famine then threatened the country,

and he at once began to provide for the needs of the natives, establishing orphanages, and two Christian villages where native boys and girls were trained, and where medical attendance was provided for sufferers. He was called *marabout* by the grateful and astonished Arabs. Then came the foundation of the *Pères Blancs*, dressed like natives and turned into Africans for the love of Africa. These devoted missionaries penetrated right through the desert to equatorial Africa, and suffered terribly from hardship and persecution at the hands of the savage tribes of the interior. As, however, they could not reach and preach to the Arab women, Lavigerie also started a sisterhood, *Les Sœurs Blanches*. When Tunis was occupied, he organised Catholicism there, and restored Carthage as an archiepiscopal see, holding this title as well as that of Algiers. He was made a cardinal in 1882, and in his later years carried on a big campaign against African slavery.

These White Fathers lead humble, self-sacrificing lives, and though they may not do much in the direction of actual conversion from Mohammedanism to Christianity, the example they set has a good effect. Politically the Moslem abhors the Christian, but individually I found the Moslem showed a greater tolerance towards the Christian faith than the ordinary Christian shows towards the teachings of Mohammed.

The further one got away from the town Moors, and mixed amongst the nomads, or the pastoralists, or the men attending to the date-palms, the more delightfully primitive the natives were found to be. Dirty in many respects, their love for water is almost a passion. Without it, the desert is a grave; with

it, it is like standing at the gates of Paradise. Good Moslems build fountains that they may receive the benedictions of the thirsty. But whilst the European prefers to slake the dryness of his mouth at a running stream, the Tunisian prefers still water. From a pool, even though it be covered with green slime, he suffers no ill effects, whereas, he tells you, running water has qualities which give him internal pains.

All down the coast, from Tunis to Sousse—and one of the most exquisite sights in the world is modern white Carthage, basking in the sun across the bay—a little railway runs, very dilatory, but revealing a countryside glorious with flowers; indeed, it is in this district that most of the blooms are grown for the purposes of manufacture into perfume, rich gold, radiant blues, heavy reds, and softest violets. Sousse and Sfax are delightful towns, clean and Eastern, and inviting the traveller to play the *lazy man*, for things are taken easily and life slides along like a drowsy, sunny afternoon. And you can get to Gafsa by train, right in the heart of the oasis country—date trees and pomegranates everywhere—and there the Arabs do not veil their women; except in the case of those who can be described as “the quality.”

When the wind blows, and the sky is yellow with sand, and your eyes are pained, and your mouth full of grit, it is uncomfortable. But it is well to forget these things, and remember the sight of the trees when you have been travelling over the arid, featureless waste of land. A considerable date trade with Europe is growing up. Fortunes are being made out of alfa grass. The central highlands have

been well explored, with the consequence that zinc mines have been sunk, and concessions for phosphates secured.

Thus, throughout Tunisia we find some of the feverish spirit of modern commerce alongside the medieval methods of manufacture of the natives. As, in all the bazaars, the make and sale of particular articles are kept to certain streets, so all the trades are combined in guilds. Hard is the lot of a Tunisian who would break away from the traditional way of producing an article. The saddler is the higher-grade artisan, and very gorgeous, with gold and turquoises, are the saddles of the kaid. A Tunisian with a valuable horse and highly ornamented saddle is as sure of salaams as the Englishman who goes touring with a £2,000 automobile.

Though there are business-minded Frenchmen energetically taking advantage of the natural resources of Algeria, that cannot be said in regard to Tunisia. The colonists, as I have said, are Italians. An easy way I found in vogue was to purchase a stretch of fertile land, and let it out to the natives, not for rent but for a share of the produce. And it is not the native who gets the larger share. Spurred by the success in Algeria, attempts have been made to stimulate vine culture. The result has not been promising. But much is done with the growing of olives; the oil is good, and there is the prospect of a really good trade. The fishing areas along the coast have nearly all been conceded by the French Government to companies, and a great traffic with France exists. The fish is of better quality than that on the French coast.

I have mentioned the colonising which is done by Italians. But something must be said about the Jews, for here—as indeed along the whole stretch of northern Africa, from Tunis to Tangier—the Jew holds the most important place in the commerce of the land. The eagle nose associated with the semitic race is not much in evidence.

Tunisian Jews by no means favour the French occupation ; there are certain legal restraints upon their methods of money-making which they do not appreciate. But there is certainly this to be said for the Tunisian Jew—and it is a feature which provides a distinction, apart from the characteristics of the race—he is a genuine worker. Apart from saddlery, which is retained amongst the Moors, there are few of the skilled trades which are not dominated by the Jews. Of course, they have monopolised the tailoring business. But they are good blacksmiths, and gangs of them are to be found journeying in the track of camel caravans seeking work in their line. In Tunis the Jewish children literally gobble education. The Jew has no foolish prejudices. He willingly sends his children to a Roman Catholic school if there he gets an education superior to that which he can obtain from the rabbis. He picks up languages as readily as he breeds fleas. If ever real, active effort comes in Tunisia to throw off the French yoke, the Jews will supply the brains of the movement.

Now, in Tunis, it is impossible to tell a Jew from the usual mixed-bred Tunisian, except, maybe, for a certain quickness in the eye. In the old days Jews were obliged to dress differently from Arabs ; they had to carry little bells to signal their approach ; they were

obliged to walk bare-footed past the mosques, and they were forbidden ever to ride a horse, or even a donkey in some places. Of course, the Arabs hate them. But the Jews patronise the big cafés, and ride in motor-cars, and the Arabs are their servants. The greatest insult you can offer an Arab is to call him a Jew.

The Jews are subject to their own Hebraic laws, and pay taxes specially for the aiding of poor Jews. The singular thing is that the Jewish laws are administered by Mohammedans. Further, whilst the Jews obey the laws of their race, they are subject to the laws of the Arabs. So, although the Jew squeezes, he is also squeezed in turn. I have met Christians in Tunis who are quite sure the Jews kidnap Gentile children, kill them, and drink their blood.

It is natural that the Jews, settled for centuries in North Africa, should have picked up some of the religious ceremonials of the Mohammedans. They make pilgrimages to Moslem shrines, venerate saints, and burn candles in the *zouia* of Sidi Marez, who was the first Mohammedan to permit Jews to live in Tunis. Also, the Tunisian Jews believe in polygamy, and this is practised if the first wife is not prodigal in progeny. But childless widows have the right to claim to be married to their brother-in-law, even though he be married already, and if he refuses—well, they have the satisfaction of hauling him before the Hebrew tribunal, pulling off his shoes and spitting on them, which must be a great satisfaction.

Every Jewish woman must know some industry, no matter how wealthy she be. She is a subservient creature. She and she only must prepare her hus-

band's bed, and when he eats she must stand by his side and wait upon him. Brides are fattened before marriage exactly in the same way as Moslem girls.

The European Jew is a born musician. But the Tunisian Jew has lived so long amongst Moham-medans that he has lost his ear for European music, and the European has no appreciation for the fear-some discords which are counted as music amongst the Jews who live in the land of the Bey.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE FOREIGN LEGION

*La Légion Etrangère*—that is one of the most interesting things in the world. It is mainly composed of foreigners who, for dark reasons of their own, leave their native country and hide their identity amid the sands of French Africa—though now Frenchmen, having served as conscripts at home, can volunteer as soldiers in the French Legion.

I saw many of them at Sidi-Bel-Abbis—the headquarters—at Saida, at Ain-Sefra, and away south at Figuig, where a French wedge is being driven into Morocco. There are Frenchmen and Alsatians and Lorrainers, Germans, Belgians, Swiss, Italians, Austrians, Dutchmen, Spaniards, Russians, Danes, Greeks, Portuguese, Servians, Roumanians, Turks, and I heard of twenty-nine Americans and twenty-one Englishmen.

Fine, lithe, dare-devil fellows—but not many Frenchmen. They are in slouching cotton garments, and they are not young soldiers. Listen, and though French is spoken, it is often with the accent of the foreigner. Here is a group, and they are talking German. A couple of dark-skinned men go by and their tongue is Spanish. Ah! there is the musical lilt of Italian.

Who are these men? Many—most—are from the



provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, lost to France in the war with Germany forty years ago. Young fellows, German subjects, speaking the German tongue, but their hearts warm to France, the land of their fathers, escape service as German soldiers by joining the Foreign Legion of France. No questions are asked; they are enrolled by whatever name they choose to give.

Rich young Austrians and spendthrift Russians, ruined and disgraced at Monte Carlo, and failing to blow their brains out, disappear. Their friends never hear of them again. You find them in the Foreign Legion. They give themselves French names, though their French is broken. When the roll-call is made they stand silent; then, with quick gesture they respond. The French officer smiles, but asks no questions.

Young Englishmen, young Americans, who have shamed their families and have thought it advisable to clear out, hide themselves under French names in the Foreign Legion. They are taciturn men, with life stories not to be told. And no questions are ever asked.

I recall one morning at Saida. I was weary with much travelling. It was hot, and there was not a breath of air. Saida is an unattractive town, with an indifferent hotel and an ugly cathedral. The civilians are Spaniards. But everywhere were soldiers of the Foreign Legion, marching quickly, and often there was the lilt of a bugle.

Before the town gates I saw a clump of cypress-trees. They suggested coolness. Soon I was in the cemetery, gaudy and bizarre, as the burial-places

of Latins always are ; tawdry chapels with cheap tablets, and cheaper oleographs, and bunches of paper rosettes, and even photographs of the dead taken after death.

A fat gravedigger, with sweat bespangling his brow, directed me to the spot I was searching for—the last sleeping-place of soldiers of the Foreign Legion. It was a stretch of brown earth. There were no marble monuments. There were long rows of little wooden crosses, made of laths and painted black. But many of them were broken, and the names which had once been painted on them in white had been washed off by the rains or burnt off by the sun.

A forlorn, weed-strewn corner of the cemetery—very quiet that hot morning. That patch of earth was a volume of mystery. Blackguards lay there, men who had betrayed women, brave men, men who had panted for adventure and sought it in Algeria and now had their last camp at Saida, men of noble lineage who had shamed their families. How many mothers in distant lands, thinking of their wild boys who had gone away and never returned, knew they were under the soil at Saida ?

The fat gravedigger was agreeing that it was sad so many names were obliterated from the crude, black, wooden crosses, when up the cypress avenue came a French captain, in tight-fitting, gold-buttoned jacket, and wide, wine-coloured trousers. A frail, sharp-featured, quick-eyed young officer, with much sadness in his face. His hair was grey. He had come from the colonel, and his instructions were—evidently there had been some misunderstanding—that no

civilians were to be buried in this quarter of the cemetery, but that all the soldiers were to lie together. The gravedigger gave a half bow. And the graves were to be tidied up, and all the weeds removed. The gravedigger nodded. The crosses were to be repaired, and all the names restored. The gravedigger shrugged his fat shoulders; he could mend the crosses, but how was he to know what name was to be put on each? The captain said he would endeavour to find out if there was any record. However, the colonel wanted the graves of the soldiers better cared for; they were a disgrace.

It was a sultry morning, and the sun blazed on the mounds of earth, and in the shade of the cypress-trees sweet-throated birds were singing blithely.

Sidi-Bel-Abbis, the headquarters of the Foreign Legion. A town with a history reaching back to the Roman occupation, but now a French military town, heavily fortified, and protected with formidable walls. I found it a clean and pleasant town, with long and cool avenues of plane and silver beech trees, and on the trunk of each tree an advertisement of some French liqueur. There were French cafés, and beneath the red and yellow awnings officers, sun-baked, dusty, and in riding-boots, were sipping beverages and playing cards, and chatting and reading newspapers, and constantly returning the salutes of soldiers passing by.

The barracks were big and square-built and white.

It was the blaze of the day, and along the dusty road came swinging the troops. They were in white, with a thick blue wool cummerbund about them;

they had small caps; short leggings encased their ankles; on each man's back was his full kit, and the rifles were carried anyhow on the shoulders. Young men and middle-aged men, they were all firm-chinned men. They were smothered in dust, and the sweat trickled down their cheeks. Constant work, and, when there is no work, marching—prolonged marching under Africa's sun—marching the men till they are dog-tired, making them always carry their heavy kit. That is the way the French keep the Foreign Legion in order.

In the public gardens, luxurious with tall trees, with emblematic figures in marble at intervals, and the splash of little waterfalls frequent, I heard music. It was the band of the Foreign Legion at practice, the second finest band belonging to France, coming next to that of the Garde Républicaine. Under a bower of trees sat the men, in *négligé* attire, without caps, in shirt-sleeves, anyhow; it was too hot for ceremony. The bandmaster, a short, energetic man, perspiring much, was starting them and checking them, making them go over passages again, very *piano* in one part, vigorously *fortissimo* in another, making them put colour and shade and feeling into the music. Whatever evil reputation the Foreign Legion has in France, these players—Poles, Austrians, Italians, Spaniards and Germans—struck me as men with refined countenances.

On the seats in the paths were soldiers reading or playing chess or smoking. At some distance were groups of Arabs.

Daredevilry is the thing that mostly attracts men

to the Foreign Legion. It owes its origin to the large number of foreign exiles who swarmed into France after 1830, the roughest and most cosmopolitan of crowds. Every trade and profession is represented. Some of the bravest things ever done in war have been done by men of the Foreign Legion. They are given the hard nuts in campaigns to crack ; they are worked as no other soldiers on earth are worked ; the pay they receive is paltry. Yet, withal, they are a good-natured lot. They are tough, and they fight recklessly.

Marching to death—that is the lot of many of them. Here is a story which was told down at the back of Morocco in 1910 : A mounted company of the First Regiment was out. According to custom, there was one mule for two men, who used the beast alternately for a stage of three miles. The third day came ; the heat was torrid ; men were parched. A young Alsatian, named Weisrock, disobeyed the instructions of his officer that no water should be taken from a particular well. But Weisrock was thirsty, and he would run the risk of fever or poison rather than fail to quench his thirst. The officer was indignant. As punishment, Weisrock was ordered to walk the next stage and not ride. He was very footsore and he limped. Because he lagged, he was ordered to walk another stage, three in succession. Friends offered their mules to him, but this was prohibited. He struggled painfully to keep up with the column. A kind-hearted corporal suggested Weisrock should hold on to his mule's tail and so get help. This was detected ; Weisrock was reviled ; he must march alone. Weisrock staggered and fell.

His gun was taken away from him, and he was left alone, as it was thought he was shamming. Toward night, as Weisrock did not come into camp, mates were sent to look for him. They found human bones to which bits of flesh were attached. Weisrock had fallen a prey to jackals and hyenas.

When a man joins the Foreign Legion he does so for five years, and his pay is five centimes (one half-penny English money) a day. I remember seeing a crowd of them come aboard the steamer in which I was travelling from Marseilles to Algiers. They were grimy, unshaven, and they all looked as though wearing clothes which had been intended for somebody else. They were old clothes. I am ignorant whether the French nation provides its warriors with boots; if so, the footgear of these soldiers had been provided from a rummage collection—there were top-boots and low shoes, hobnailed boots and patent leather boots, brown buttoned boots and slippers.

With their soiled, red, peaked caps, and ill-fitting blue jackets, and much-too-long red trousers, the soldiers lined up on the wharf at Marseilles. Names were shouted, and as each man moved to the gangway a horsecloth sort of blanket was thrown to him.

The men lounged forward amongst baggage and ropes and what looked like the paraphernalia of a circus. There was a throng of deck passengers squatting in the corners, and the French soldiers travelled "deck" with the rest. They slept on deck, with their brown rugs wrapped about them. As they covered their heads and sprawled anyhow,

they looked like a heap of badly filled sacks of potatoes.

They were good-hearted fellows. The Tommy-soldier in every country is a good sort, and I know him well and have lived with him—the Russian, Turkish, German, American, Indian, Japanese, Italian. The Tommy, wherever found, is a bit of a humorist and something of a philosopher. I spent a good deal of my time amongst these French soldiers.

About four o'clock in the afternoon men appeared with slop-basins, tin washbowls, nameless utensils, in which were floating messes of flesh, haricot beans and grease. No spoons, no knives, no forks. With their pocket-knives, the men sawed chunks off loaves, dived for pieces of meat and ate anyhow. Not a word of grumbling. They joked about the odour of the meat. They called it fanciful names. Somebody unearthed a lot of tin plates; the greasy haricot mess was tilted partly into the plates and partly on deck; the men supped a little, and then with one accord they marched to the side of the ship and tossed their food into the sea.

A garden watering-can of red wine appeared. One man had a tin cup in his knapsack, and this passed round. "Ah! champagne," muttered Tommy with a leer, and then twisted his face as though gulping ink. Yet Jean Jacques was happy—not because he liked the provender, but simply because he had the amiability which marks the Tommy of all lands.

Most of these men had sold their civilian clothes in Marseilles. Harpies prey upon them, and maybe

give five sous for a pair of trousers. But glory in Algeria, the vision of a splendid career is before their eyes, and they are giving the good-bye to Europe. Are they to starve on the yellow sands across the Mediterranean—well, what matters it? They have heard the stories of gallant deeds. There was a young German who won the cross of the Legion of Honour on the field of battle, and then died—and there is a belief he was a prince of the Royal House of Prussia.

Work! That is the beginning and the end of the legionary's career. The old men knock the younger into shape. The barracks are spotless. Kits are kept in such order that everything can be found in the dark. Offend against discipline, and the soldier has as punishment to march for three hours a day round the barrack yard, and in his knapsack he carries stones weighing eighty pounds. That takes the spirit out of him.

Have you heard of the "Legion's breakfast"—two hours of exercise at the double, and the only pauses allowed just equal to the time it takes to smoke a cigarette? Two hours more in polishing accoutrements.

Then march—march as you please—but march. Eight hours a day at the pace of four miles an hour—that keeps the men fit. They are not in light, but in heavy *marching order*: thick-soled boots, leather gaiters, heavy blue coat, cummerbund of thick wool, and red kepi, rifle and bayonet, from two to four hundred rounds of ammunition, a heavy kit, two complete uniforms, tent canvas, poles, a blanket, fuel for the bivouac, canteen with food, every necessity



for a man to camp out for three days, and weighing in all about a hundred pounds.

So the men become wiry and hard, and are inured to roughing it. It is all terribly hard at first. But in time comes a pride that they can do so much. In the essentials, discipline is severe, almost cruel; but in other matters they are allowed to do as they like. *Esprit de corps* is encouraged, and it exists. There is plenty of rifle practice, and the men are good shots. The officers are ardent. I have met fine officers in other parts of the world, but I have never met officers who were all so actuated by a fiery, severe sense of duty as the officers in the Foreign Legion.

Fine roads in Algeria. Frenchmen are naturally proud of their skill in road-making. In no new part of the British Empire, and in no part of the newly developed United States, are there roads anything like the roads the French have built through desert tracts of Algeria. They are level, well-metalled, well cared-for. Three quarters of these roads have been built by legionaries. I remember travelling in the Djurdjura Mountains in the north, from Tizi-Ouzou to Fort National, some of it through extremely rocky country, and the road rising two thousand three hundred feet between the two towns, a distance of seventeen miles. Half a century ago the French soldiers built this road in twenty days. Folk in other countries, who do not know what the industry of the French people is, may have some difficulty in appreciating what fine roads the French have built in Algeria. To-day, far south, on the blistering desert, the legionaries are building roads for a wage a

Chinese coolie would scorn. If there are houses to be built, the legionaries can build them—and they will produce the architects to design them. If engineering difficulties arise, there are always legionaries who have been engineers. If the Army doctor falls sick, there is always a man in the ranks who has been a doctor. If there is dirty work to be done, the cleaning of a cesspool, for instance, the men of the Legion are employed. Working and marching and fighting, with never a halt, that is the life of soldiers in the Foreign Legion—and the pay is one halfpenny a day!

An excellent business investment for France! That is empire-building on the cheap. The scent of glory, the primitive fighting instincts of men, the door of escape from dishonour and tragedy, the wild life—oh, the Foreign Legion is never short of men!

Riff-raff of the world, the scum of society, young men hungry for adventure, men of good family hiding under fictitious names—who knows anything about the life of the soldier in the Foreign Legion? It is romantic—did not Ouida write about it in her novels?—but what about the body-aching punishments, the ceaseless toil, the interminable marches—marches which produce madness, and the madness leads to murder and suicide and desertion—a desertion which means death on the hot sands—or a dash into the hills of Morocco? And in Morocco what happens? Are they shot by the Moors? Do they become Mohammedans? Some undoubtedly join the Moorish army. Others, their courage cooled, starving, wan, weakened in body, trail back and take their punishment—awful punishment.

Yet it is a life which attracts. All brave men, they are the men who are engaged in what French politicians call the "peaceful penetration" of Africa. But there is fighting—which the European newspapers hear of rarely. The *légionnaire* loves fighting, and he will die rather than retreat. Eleven times in battle has the Legion refused to obey orders when the trumpet has sounded the retreat.

## CHAPTER XXI

### AT THE BACK OF MOROCCO

It meant a journey of several hundred miles across desert waste, the sand dunes blown up like great waves and held at the point they break, and then through rocky ravines, with the distraught rock burnt brick-red, before the palm-trees of Figuig, fed by waters from the mountains of Morocco, came into sight.

I am at Beni-Ounif, a splay-footed, blistering, dust-swept military post, set up by the French far south and right at the back of Morocco. The buildings are fortified. Even the huge-yarded caravan-serie of mud-walls called the Grand Hôtel du Sahara, has high, rounded towers and loopholes through which to shoot.

And here, in a semi-darkened room, for coolness' sake, come French officers to eat. They are not the gay, garrulous dandies of the boulevards, the *pantalons rouges*, but thick-set men in khaki. Most are bearded. Their foreheads are lined, and their yellow, sun-shrivelled cheeks are seared. Their work is hard and dangerous, and Paris knows little about it.

They are strangely silent, with the fixed faces of men who live alone with their thoughts—the faces of men who have spent long years on the desert, and have little to look upon but an eternity of eye-aching

sand and an eternity of sky with the blue bleached out of it.

France sends her Foreign Legion to Africa. The men have no friends ; they are brave to recklessness. When they die, there are none to spill tears for them. And they are down here, at the back of Morocco, where there is no boundary between Morocco and Algeria.

Other troops there are—black ! They come from Senegal, lithe-limbed and as dusk as night, and their lips protrude and are pursy, like pieces of putrid meat, and the whites of their eyes are as yellow as coffee-stains. They have their wives and their children with them : the children, little balls of black, impish stark-nakedness sprawling in the hot sands : the wives—with cropped, woolly hair shaven in streaks from temple straight back to neck—wearing flaming loin-cloths, but otherwise naked. Their skin is a sort of velvet ebony ; their milkless breasts sag for a foot. They squat outside the long line of mud-huts which the French have built, and they cook for their husbands, who, khaki-clad, red-fezzed but bare-footed, are being taught war out on the oven of the desert.

Foreigners from God knows where, and black fellows from Senegal—these are the human weapons France intends to push through the back door of Morocco when France thinks the hour has come to grip the kingdom of the Moors.

Wild warriors are these hillmen of south-east Morocco. It will need daring men to face them, men who will do anything, stick at nothing. German jealousy is the cause of the Moors refusing railways

in their land. But down in this eastern region, where boundaries are ill-defined or non-existent, the French are quietly putting down rails. The Moors protest, but retire. Then another fifty miles of rails are put down. So the French, with these military railway spurs being driven west and south, are extending their power in Morocco.

Figuig is the danger-point of the whole business. It is not a town but a district, an oasis of date-palms in which are seven small towns. Diplomatically it belongs to Morocco. It has never been ceded. The Pasha, representative of the Sultan, lives at El-Oudagh, and he has soldiers. But because, seven years ago, some Frenchmen were fired upon, France said, "We will manage this district."

The French authorities were not zealous that I should go into the Figuig region. It was unsettled, and for a generation the oasis had been a refuge for all Arabs who had been fighting against French influence in the south. The absence of the French was interpreted by the Moors as fear of the people of Figuig. It required a few cannon beating upon the mud ramparts of Zenaga to change their opinion. But they are sullen.

As I was anxious, Col. Drogue, commandant of the Bureau Arabe at Algiers, courteously gave instructions that I should be assisted. Accordingly, on the morning my companion and I got into the saddle at Beni-Ounif, we were accompanied by two armed Arabs, who were ornamental and graceful in their long burnouses of blue and waving head-dresses of white, and who, with rifles across their knees, put their horses through a fantasia of capering. Our

own horses were good. We had ornate Moorish saddles, high-pommelled, and with backs like dining-room chairs, while the stirrups resembled miniature coal-scuttles of steel. It was picturesque—but I am going to say no more about those Moorish saddles.

Across the plains, through a gulch, and there broke the oasis—thousands of feathery palms—the green very restful to the eye. Practically the whole oasis is ribbed with ramparts, mud-built, with round towers every few hundred yards. But gaps have been knocked through the ramparts. Inside are the date-palms, all fenced with mud and rubble walls, for the trees belong to private Moorish owners. The walls are so high it was hard at times to look over them from the saddle. In places the water was cisterned, and ran off in channels, nourishing the palm gardens in turn. The date harvest was over and only occasionally were clusters of fruit, like old amber, seen in the trees.

Not a breath of air, not a sound, as we rode those lofty, narrow, mud-girt ways, with the fretted green fronds overhead. It was a maze of passages, and my friend and I made jokes about the Hampton Court maze being a fool to it. Very narrow; so narrow it was impossible to turn a horse in it. We rode single file—first an Arab with his rifle handy, then myself, next my friend, and then the second Arab, also with his rifle across his knees. Not a soul did we see.

Like the quick shifting of a scene, we were before the town of El Abid, and the hoofs of our horses were making clatter over the cobbles at the zig-zag town gate, which is closed every night at sundown

and kept barred until the sun shows again next morning. Fifty yards away, it was like a town in ruins, mud-houses rising in tiers, top chambers with one wall gone and making boxed-in balconies, hundreds of little peep-hole windows, deep, showing into blackness, but not an inch of glass anywhere.

Moors, big and swarthy and villain-faced, were squatting on their haunches as we rode up. They spat on the ground to intimate we were contaminating the air. But not otherwise did they show any indication that they noticed us. They went on talking and never raised their eyes ; it was an example of Oriental self-possession.

Instead of riding through alleys of mud hovels, we were in a town of enormously high houses, all of sun-baked bricks, with fine Moorish arches and frequently decorated doors. It was like a place of the dead—a hot, foetid, gasping place. That *Roumis* were about had run forward, and doors were closed and streets deserted.

What streets! They were tunnels, long and cavernous and black, and brought to recollection long, foul railway arches in more civilised parts of the world. The air was stuffy and filled with dust. At each turning were shafts of light. The leading Arab spurred forward through the gloom, and made a curious picture, with the sun on his bright raiment and the gorgeous trappings of his saddlery. He signalled us to come on. The mysterious, deserted, dark passage-ways would have put quaint thoughts into the most unimaginative. We laughed that, if the Moors wanted to make holiday with us, our two



Arab guards would not be much defence—though we fancied the French would make things lively for the inhabitants of El Abid afterwards.

A few men crouching in the shadows of the wall, a few white and ungainly bundles which we knew to be women, hobbling hurriedly into dim doorways—those were all the inhabitants we saw.

More groves of date-palms. We were splashing up a water channel. A swift yell, and we pulled bridles. A Moor appeared above a wall. We must stop. We were going to where Moorish women, unveiled, were clothes-washing at a well. If we went there it would be taken we had gone to feast our eyes on the faces of Moslem women, and that is what no strange man must do. Of course we would stop. At a turn, we reined our horses round, and when we got back there was the Moor with a bundle of fresh-plucked dates in the folds of his burnous, and he offered us to eat. On some palms were skewered the skulls of dead beasts—to bring good luck.

Oasis joined oasis, and each town was walled. Sometimes a stern buttress, sometimes a crumbling mud bank. From sun-up to sun-down—except for a couple of hours when we halted to feed and to doze beneath the palms by the edge of a river in a gorge—we were in the saddle, visiting these weird towns of far-away Figuig, towns with quaint names—Tahtani, El-Oudaghir, El-Maiz Faokani, Zleman, El-Hamman Foukani and Zenaga.

Like names out of the "Arabian Nights." The oasis itself: a little bit of green, the child of trickling streams from unexplored mountains. The towns like honeycombed ant-hills: mighty structures of

mud. The people, barbarous, fanatical, superstitious, hating the Christian, fearing the foreigner, with no learning, with knowledge of the world all askew, places to which civilisation has not yet come, where life is primitive and semi-savage, where there is belief that jinns inhabit the hills, where town gates are closed to keep out night wanderers, where women weave with hand-shuttle the clothes of the people, and the men water their dates and sell them to passing caravans, where women are little other than slaves and beasts of burden, where, when evening comes, silence and mystery cloak the town and the streets are so black they are like holes drilled into the night.

Yet, for all this, how fascinating ! What a throb of adventure it gives to go riding through this troublous region, where things are very much as they have been these thousand years ! I liked to see the old walls and the cumbersome gates, to see the haughty Moor turn aside whilst fingering his silver-embossed carbine. It was romantic to watch a bundle of white clothing standing in a recess, and, through a little chink near the top of the bundle, see one bright Oriental woman's eye fixed on you.

It was at El-Oudaghir that the Moors showed themselves freely. Their women kept out of the way, but the men strutted along the dark lanes and cavernous passages. But they never gave the salute to the stranger which is customary in Algeria. There was no market. There were no *souks*, or bazaars. One or two half-cellars, with dealers squatting on the stone slabs at the door, was all I saw. The chief industry was the repair of firearms—a medley assort-

ment of antique guns which were old at the time of Waterloo.

Some of the ways seemed at the bottom of a well, so high were the adjoining walls. Long stone benches were polished with much lounging. There was a lot of disease, and creatures in tatters with faces eaten away with festers hobbled by.

Here, at El-Oudaghir, resides the Pasha, the representative of the Sultan of Morocco. But the Pasha was away at Tangier, and I missed the talk I had anticipated. His palace is of mud. There is a courtyard, and two men in red fezzes and rags were leaning on antique rifles. A stone's throw from the town is a jumble of huts—the Moorish barracks. Sour-looking tatterdemalions, who receive no pay, slouched over the adjoining graves—hundreds of thousands of graves, marked only by jagged stones to show where the dead lie. Nobody cares for the dead. Paths are across the graves. I had to ride over them with my horse.

At a corner of the town was a crumbling tower. On the tower stood a red-capped old fellow with the blackest of faces and a spray of grey beard sprouting under his chin. He was on sentinel duty, with his rifle on shoulder. There was the saddest look in his bleared and rheumy eyes. Maybe he was mourning over the defeated glories of the Moors. He was looking east, a decrepit old chap with a rusty rifle on a crooked mud tower—supposed to be guarding the last outpost of his royal master, the Sultan at Fez. He was a pathetic figure, not only in himself, but in what he represented. I rode up towards him and saluted. But he took no notice. I turned my

horse and steadied it, so that I might take a snap-shot from the saddle. The old man disappeared as through a trap-door.

The Children of Israel are everywhere, and I found forty families of them in El-Oudaghir. Into some of their houses I went. There was nothing to distinguish the men from the Moors in costume, and little in countenance, except that they were softer in feature, and they had that furtive, cringing, kicked-dog look which marks Jews in countries where they have been subjected to centuries of persecution. Through darksome passages to a space opening to the sky, and then various stories resting on unhewn palm trunks, but each room with no wall towards the opening; a few rush mats, a few grimy pots and pans, a few unclean children with eyes blocked with flies, a plentitude of squalor—that was the characteristic of all these Jewish houses.

But the women were bedecked. There was kohl to give sparkle to their eyes, and henna dye to give beauty to their fingers. They wore turbans of red and jackets of yellow and petticoats of red again. Rings of gold, with a circumference of six inches, were in their ears; to these were attached chunks of rough coral and bits of amber, and beads and silver coins from all the Mediterranean countries, and the lobe of the ear was often extended. Necklets, also of crude coral and amber and bunches of coins, Papal, Spanish, Moorish, French—very barbaric they all looked. They wore armlets and anklets of heavy curves of silver.

Our Arab guard had told us of a ravine where water and the shelter of palms could be got whilst

we rested during the furious heat of midday. It was about a couple of miles from the walls of El-Oudaghir. We had got beyond the gates, passed the Sultan's barracks, and were riding through a break in the outer wall which circles the whole oasis, when "ping, ping, bang!" went guns.

We dug heels into our horses, sprang into the open, and wheeled round. The Arabs raised their rifles. Half a mile away, and from the shelter of the palms and the walls, a parcel of Moors were having shots at us. I have never laid claim to any courage, and as I had no weapon but a riding-whip, I was not particularly cock-a-hoop. There is nothing funny in being shot at. The four of us might have given chase, and there would have been an interesting five minutes. But the shots were falling short, a good two hundred yards short of us; we saw the little kicks of dust where the hard-baked earth was peppered. So we just "cleared out." We put a good face on it by waving our hands to the Moorish gentlemen behind the mud wall, were glad their guns were old and carried no distance, and we rode across the desert as though we were brave creatures chasing somebody instead of really getting out of the way. When we got to the dip and munched our lunch, and smoked and felt drowsy, we put one of the Arabs up on the bank to watch. When we awoke he had no news.

It was still scorching afternoon when we cantered into the town of Zenaga, the largest of the anti-French haunts in the oasis. Our horses gave a leap, and, before we quite knew what we were doing, our four affrighted horses were in the tiny market-placc,

which was packed with Moors. Horses at any time are unusual in these close-packed towns, but the sudden apparition of two Arabs, wearing the blue cloaks of French service, and two Europeans in the hated garb of the unbeliever, aroused commotion. Perhaps the Moors thought they were being attacked. There was uproar, and we were surrounded by a hundred white-robed, savage-faced and dagger-eyed men. Our horses, restless at the quietest of times, began careering. A gun went off with violent explosion. I really thought something exciting was about to take place. No damage. A Moor in a café had seized his rifle, inadvertently pulled the trigger, and landed his bullet in the roof. We slipped from our horses, and stood, the centre of an angry, gesticulating mob. The Arabs sighted friends, and the situation was explained.

We sat in the doorway of a shop, and, over a charcoal fire, water was boiled, and we were regaled with syrupy tea in dirty glasses. The air was stifling; it was not only hot, but it was laden with powdered brick-dust. There was a myriad of tantalising flies. The atmosphere reeked with unwashed Moor. However, we sat there and drank the over-sugared tea, and smiled and shook hands with Moors, and pretended we were having the time of our lives!

The warm oven-flush of the desert afterwards felt cool by contrast. The air of the desert is clean.

## CHAPTER XXII

### MOROCCO

MOROCCO—the West-land of the ancients—but an Eastern country just across the way from Europe.

A wild country and a wild people, having nothing in common with the moderns. The Arab in the plains is squeezed by the Moors of the towns; the Berber hillmen, with their forays and fanatical risings, make the flabby-hearted townsmen tremble. The Jew, cringing when weak, wrings the life-blood out of the Moslem when he has the power. A people incapable of self-government. A rickety throne, with bloody-handed pretenders constantly claiming it. A country with European nations playing the deep game of diplomacy to secure it. A region of corruption, confusion, and contradiction. That is Morocco.

Yet it is well to remember that through all the vicissitudes of the centuries—with England inheriting a port here, Spain holding one there, France seizing one somewhere else—Morocco has never had the flag of a Christian nation, nor even the flag of Mohammedan Turkey, flying over it. Intending conquerors have come, but every time they have been compelled to go back. The warrior Berbers were always too much for them. The bringing of the Mohammedan faith to the hills did nothing to reconcile the hatred

of the people toward the people of the East. It seemed to put the fire of frenzy into their veins. And when they were not resisting the invader they were fighting each other.

A decrepit country to-day. But once the Moors crossed the Straits of Gibraltar, conquered southern Spain, held it for five hundred years, and the architectural glories of Cordova, Granada and Seville tell of their culture. Now Spain is trying to grip pieces of the coast. I remember the night when, in a foul little coasting boat, I arrived at Melilla, one of the Spanish-held towns. The Spanish gendarmes came off to make sure we were not a Moorish pirate craft. One imposing don of a gendarme, in striped white, and wearing a cocked hat, crushed up at the back as though he was in the habit of taking his siesta in it, stood at the head of the gangway and spoke furious Spanish to Moors who did not understand what he said; and then he punched those who were escaping from Melilla, and pushed those who were adventurous enough to desire to get into it. Spaniards were tumbling baggage overboard, and slim, black-clad, whiskered, crouching Jews were crawling on deck with more baggage than they could properly carry. They flung their beds amongst the grime and cuspidatory discharges of asthmatic Spaniards on that portion of the deck called "first class," until they were hustled forward to dirtier places suitable for fourth-class passengers.

The Spanish occupation of Melilla gave the dons a warm time. The Moors were in revolt, and a lot of Spanish blood was lost before victory came. It came not because the Moors were defeated, but



because the Moors in the adjoining mountains went inland to gather their crops. Cunning fellows, these Moors! In the early morning they would spread bundles of their burnouses on the ground. Up would go the Spanish spying balloon, and through the glasses the Spaniards were sure they saw a great body of the enemy. They signalled to the gunners in what valley the enemy lay, and then there was a bombardment of those burnouses. Meanwhile the Moors were in the shelter of the mountains, safe and grinning. At night they gathered their burnouses and slept in them, and next morning they spread them somewhere else. Spain now claims many millions of money from Morocco, but it is not likely to get them.

A rich land, envied by Spain and by France, but sparsely developed. It is possible to get two crops a year in Morocco, but the native only troubles about one, for the extra profit would go into the pockets of those in authority over him. And the Moors do not go pirating any more. It is a fact that, but for the English, the mountain-fringed land of Morocco would never have become a famous breeding place of pirates. It was the English who taught the Moors to fight Spain on the waters. When they had learnt the art, the Moors preyed on English as well as other shipping, and they even sailed as far north as Lundy Island to lie in wait for rich vessels coming from Bristol. Many an Englishman disappeared as a slave to Fez and Marrakesh, and many an Englishwoman found herself perforce the spouse of a Moor. Then there was the trade of ransom carried on by Roman Catholic priests. Kind Christians gave alms,

and the priests bargained for the release of captives. So thousands were rescued, but the story of many other thousands is lost—save for the fair-skinned Moors you meet. Now laugh at the story of John Dunton, mariner, who became a slave. He redeemed himself, and was then sent out as a master and pilot in a Moorish pirate ship to England to capture Christians. He brought his pirate employers to the Isle of Wight, and right up to Hurst Castle “where I was detained as a pirate and sent to Winchester with the rest.” Not for long, one hopes. John Dunton must have chuckled when telling the story how, under pretence of leading the Moors to capture Christians, he got the whole crew of them landed in the most Christian gaol of Winchester.

Travellers have zig-zagged their way through the hills of Morocco, and yet there are great stretches of the country which have never been visited. As the women draw their veils to hide their faces from men, so the Moors have striven to draw a veil to hide their country from the stranger. Those who know Morocco best are the first to admit they know very little of Morocco.

The Moor is sullen. He distrusts the Christian. Rarely will he speak his true thoughts. Virility has been sapped from the modern Moor. He is a decrepit descendant from marauding, quarrelsome sires.

Other countries, willy-nilly, are affected with the spin of the years. They cannot escape the influence of what we grandiloquently call “this progressive age.” Morocco stands still. Get a day’s ride from one of the ports, and Morocco is just the same to-day as it has been for centuries. We can understand,

however, how, at the bitter core of his heart, feeling impotence, there flickers and flames the old fire of resentment against the European. The pride, but none of the power, of his ancestors remains. He knows he is superior to the Christian. He knows that the foreign occupants of the Legations at Tangier are there to do obeisance to his sovereign lord the Sultan at Fez. But behind his arrogance is dread. What Allah wills shall be. It is written.

Anarchy reigns. The Sultan sends forth his tax-collectors, but the Berbers fight them with crude guerilla warfare. Well, they have to be punished. A rabble of soldiery are dispatched to the district. Villages are destroyed, cattle seized, crops burnt—but the Berbers are in the hills, where they cannot be followed. Anyway, they have resisted the tax-collectors for some years. They have maintained their independence. But in time they have to submit. There is the promise of tribute, prisoners are handed over, some are beheaded, and the heads are taken away and exhibited over the gateways of the cities as a proclamation of the Sultan's power. Taxes are paid for a year or two, until there is trouble elsewhere, and then rebellion breaks loose again.

Everybody in Morocco wears the slipper, down at heel. The slip-slop of the walk is typical of the character of the people. Nobody has any interests outside his own business. So there is no public spirit. Things go much as they drift. The principle is never to do to-day what can be put off until to-morrow. The universal immorality has numbed any of the finer senses the Moors ever had. The only failing which shocks a Moor is drunkenness.

It is to be found in the port towns, but it is unheard of in the interior. For generations the use of tobacco was prohibited—indeed, there have been seizures and all the tobacco burned—but the prohibition is now a dead letter. The devout Moor, who will contemptuously spit on the ground at the habits of “those filthy Nazarenes,” as he often calls the foreigner, thinks it no shame to keep half a dozen girls in his harem. When he gets old, the rheumy reprobate will declare all is vanity, and take to much reading of the Koran. A Moor’s piety increases in proportion to his impotence. The Paradise he dreams of in the shadow of the mosque is when he will be young again and have the most captivating of houris as his companions. The conversation of Moors is invariably on licentious subjects. The Moor is venal in his youth, and corrupt for the rest of his life. The rejuvenation of such a race seems an impossibility.

You can show a Moor all the achievements of civilisation, the wonders of mechanical science; but he will not be impressed. I remember showing to some Moors a thermos bottle, thinking they would be interested. No; they looked at it with the unconcern of a donkey looking at a wheelbarrow. This was not Oriental reserve, the result of training never to show surprise. It was inability to understand. The only mechanism I have ever seen a Moor appreciate has been a modern rifle. It is no good telling a Moor of the wonders of foreign cities. He has the American habit of capping your statement by telling you of something much bigger and more wonderful in his own country. He simply will not

believe that any land has anything superior to Morocco.

This is the kind of Moor you encounter in the towns. The country folk, the Berbers, are braver, with more sap in them, are fierce enemies and good friends, and are disposed to hospitality to the stranger if they are satisfied of his friendly intentions. The finest fellows I saw were the Riffs—tall, lean, sinewy, and with the clear eyes of courageous men. They love fighting for fighting's sake, and I verily believe they would rather you approached them with a rifle than with an olive-branch.

Women are of little account. The mother of a son is honoured, but if she gives birth to a girl she is reviled. If the daughter lacks physical charm she is an ill-used servant all her life. Let her be pretty, then she will go in marriage to a rich man, and the gift to her parents will be worth having. Or, if she is very pretty, she may even aspire to the Sultan's harem. The hearts of the Moorish mother and father flutter at the idea of a daughter of theirs maybe becoming the mother of a Sultan. For a daughter to get entrance to the Sultan's seraglio is a greater social honour than for a European lady to be received at Court.

There is much scheming and wire-pulling and presents before the frightened and yet delighted girl is given residence in the Palace. Possibly the Sultan knows nothing about her coming. She will lead the life of a toy. In the high-walled and secluded gardens she will sport until, maybe, one day the eye of the Sultan falls upon her. Perhaps she becomes the favourite. Perhaps her royal master soon tires of

her. Maybe, however, besides beauty she has conversational gifts, shrewdness—and all Oriental women are by no means stupid—and she gains ascendancy over the Sultan. This is rare.

At times the royal harem needs thinning. So a bunch of ladies are sent off to Taflet, in the Atlas Mountains. "There," says Mr. Budgett Meakin, "every other man is a direct descendant of some Moorish king, as for centuries it has served as a sort of overflow for the prolific royal house." Sometimes the Sultan will honour an appreciated governor of a town with a cast-off lady of the royal harem as a present.

There is no happy home life such as Western nations understand it. The husband and wife are not mated because of mutual affection; they never see each other till the wedding-night. The husband, if he can afford it, will have a second, third and fourth wife. The first wife, as she loses her attractiveness, is degraded. Still, as a rule, a Moor is content with one wife; but he can introduce concubines into the house. They are cheaper than wives, and can more easily be got rid of. The women are in prisons; though, on the whole, not ill-treated, according to Oriental ideas.

The Moorish woman, like the Moor, lets her thoughts run in one channel. The very fact that no other man but her master can speak to her makes her desire the forbidden fruit. So the Moors do not like their women-folk to do too much visiting over the house-tops. They know their own nature, and they suspect the nature of others. When a Moor goes on a journey he not infrequently locks his wife

inside a room and takes the key away with him. There she remains, a prisoner till his return, and her food is supplied through a tiny grating of a window.

A nice trait in the Moors is their fondness for children. A Moor is unfeignedly happy with his youngsters, and their prankishness and mischievousness—for Moslem children are much the same as children of the Nazarenes—instead of meeting with rebuke are regarded with amiable forbearance. That the father should care more for the boys than girls is only in accord with the sentiment of his people.

The manner in which infants are treated makes one wonder how any of them ever survive. Infant mortality is great. What is surprising is the way the little ones bear the heat. A peasant woman will tightly strap a child to her back with a shawl, so tightly that the limbs cannot possibly move, and only the head is protruding. The little head is often shaved, there is no covering, and the sun-rays beat down with intensity until you are sure the brains must be stewing. Yet the child dozes quite happily, unheeding the sun as it unheeds the myriad flies swarming about its eyes and mouth and nostrils.

The North African boy—and I know him from Tangier to Port Said—is the liveliest, merriest, quickest-witted little rascal imaginable. At school he is bright and learns with alacrity. But there is a stopping-place, beyond which he rarely seems to go. As he nears manhood, he dulls and becomes heavy; his power of assimilating knowledge comes to an end. You wonder why it is such bright boys grow into such stodgy-brained men. Peep into a Moorish school—a bare room, matted, with a cluster

of shoes by the door, a whiskered man squatting at the farther end, and all the lads shouting, mechanically rather than intelligently, long passages from the Koran. The school fees are trifling, but if a lad is smarter than his fellows the master takes care to show his paces, before the delighted father, and so extract from him a gift of money.

To give signs of prosperity is to invite oppression by Moorish officials. They have little or no pay; they have secured their posts by favouritism or bribery; they must recoup themselves by speculation and by tyranny—the invariable method of tax-collecting in the Orient. So there is miserable kowtowing to those who have the power. The villager makes presents to the chief of his village to save his goods from seizure; the chief slips money into the palms of his superior to save his teeth being drawn. The higher man has to “sweeten” those at Court, or he will be impeached and beheaded and all his property seized. Every Moor hungers for a post in which he may plunder those beneath him, though he knows he will be plundered by those above him. A desire to obtain wealth by crooked means is ingrained in the mind of the Moor. }

There is devilish subtlety in the punishments inflicted by those in authority on those who have roused their enmity. The Jew has no friends. Usury is forbidden by Mohammedan law. But the Jew practises it. Then he is seized. His beard is plucked out. The palms of his hands are lacerated with a dagger, and salt is rubbed into the wounds. The two hands are placed flat against each other and a tight-fitting glove is placed over both and the



wrists are roped. The raw flesh, trying to knit, causes excruciating agony. The Jew is released when he reveals where his wealth is hidden. M. Jean de Taillis describes a horrible sight when he visited Moulay Mohammed, then Pretender, who had just won a battle. An "entertainment" was provided after dinner. A prisoner named Achmet proved to be a deserter from Moulay's army, and so a lesson against treachery had to be taught. The poor wretch was dressed in a couple of woollen cloaks and brought to the middle of the camp. There he was girt with a garment of straw. His clothes were drenched with petroleum; he was fastened to a dead tree and fire applied. Death came quickly. The herald proclaimed through all the camp the fitting reward of disloyalty. When M. de Taillis took his leave on the morrow he was given an escort which also had the duty of conveying eighty-four pickled heads of prisoners, trophies of the recent fight. And all that day, and the following night, he was haunted by the gruesome sound of the skulls as they were jolted about in the baskets. When silver is being conveyed to Fez it is the order of the Sultan that the soldiers who guard it should behead a man at every stage, proclaiming him to be a thief, and so making a reign of terror.

A minor punishment is to wrench out the fingernails. Or the culprit is swung up by arms and legs, his face downwards, and he is bastinadoed till the blood spurts. When he swoons, he is doused with water till he recovers, and then the thongs swish and cut the flesh again. Or the victim is seated in a basket, hands tied to the side; he is thrown on

his back and the lash falls swiftly on the soles of the bare feet till they are a mass of gore.

Horrible though these things are—though the Moor who suffers shrieks for mercy—every Moor considers cruelty and barbarity as legitimate. There is no public opinion against oppression. It is accepted as a proper and usual proceeding. A humane Sultan, however lauded in Europe, would be a farcical figure in the eyes of his subjects, and would soon earn their contempt. There is no respect for worldly justice.

Fez, the white capital, is a place of high walls and narrow streets. The Moors there are fairer than in other parts of the country. One reason is that the people keep out of the sun as much as possible. Another reason is that the rich men of Fez like fair girls as their concubines. A girl with a European strain in her—generally stolen from the coast—is sure to bring a good price in the slave market. She is the creature of her master's passion, and if she hesitates to respond to his lustful desires she is whipped, and if obdurate she is murdered. It is nobody's business. What is the value of a mere woman ?

The streets are so narrow—black slits between the houses—that the roofs seem to touch one another, and here sit the women, laughing and gossiping licentious scandal—for they have no ideals, and usually fit in with the customs of the country.

The richer a man is the more concubines he has. He cannot spend his money in horses or automobiles ; he buys young girls. Ill-treatment is exceptional, for good-looking damsels cost money, and expensive possessions are not to be injured. The fat Moor

sips his coffee, reclines on cushions, and the girls sing to him or dance. The favourite is the Dance of the Bee, a sensual performance in which the dancer pretends she has been stung, and proceeds to strip off all clothing in the endeavour to discover the imaginary wound. The wealthy Moor prefers to have concubines to adding to the number of his wives, because he can see a slave girl before he buys her, and he cannot see his prospective wife, who is kept veiled until after the marriage ceremony; the slave, also, is more obedient than the wife, because he can more easily get rid of her. If he tires, and someone at Court despoils him of his belongings, he can sell her again or turn her out.

Many of these freed women sell their charms temporarily to any who will buy. They mostly live in one part of Fez, near the river. The houses are dens of crime. Often there is sharp murder and the bodies are tossed into the water. But the river flows past the Sultan's orange garden, and an iron grill has been erected to catch the bodies, so as not to offend the sight of his Majesty if he is sipping sherbet beneath the trees near the water's edge.

The slave market—an ordinary courtyard—is always held at twilight, between sunset and dark. Most of the wares are little negresses brought up from the region toward Timbuctoo. Old men fumble their plumpness, feel the hardness of their flesh, make them stretch their arms, show their teeth, walk about and generally exhibit themselves. The price depends on quality, youth and looks. Many slaves, nearly white, are the result of tribal wars, and fetch good prices. A son born of a slave ranks

with a legitimate son. Many of the leading men in Morocco had slave mothers. The girls, when they grow up, are sold or given as presents to adorn the harems of friends.

The ladies delight in visiting. They do not go into the streets, except to the bath or to visit the cemetery on a Friday; but they climb the little parapets on the roofs and sometimes carry a ladder to assist them. It is a deadly offence for a man, when on his own roof-top, to look upon the roof-top of a neighbour where women may be sitting unveiled. Still, I have known it happen.

There is only one carriage in Fez, and that was presented to the Sultan by Queen Victoria. But the Sultan cannot use it because the coachman's seat is higher than his own. There is not sufficient water for boating in the palace grounds. So, on the days his Majesty desires to boat, the whole water supply of Fez has to be directed into the park, and for two days over an eighth of a million of people have no water.

The recently deposed Sultan was chiefly distinguished for his insolence to the envoys of foreign Powers. Perhaps one of the reasons for this was that he subscribed to Press agencies, and had in his employ a Syrian who knew six languages, and read newspaper cuttings which told what was said about him in English, French and German journals. A Frenchman who recently visited the Moorish Court thus describes what he saw: "Mulai Hafid sat on a tapestried sofa with his legs crossed under him. He greeted our entrance with a fixed stare, his flashing black eye lighting up his otherwise impassive countenance.

On his right, seated on a carpet, was his Grand Vizier. A little behind him was an old woman of almost negroid blackness, but with features denoting energy and intelligence. She is, in fact, a remarkably clever woman. She follows the Sultan everywhere, tastes his food and drink (as a precaution against poison), and even accompanies him to the mosque. She exercises remarkable influence over him. Frequently she massages the foot of his Shereefian Majesty, which is always bare. When Mulai Hafid wishes to honour one of his courtiers, he sends the old lady away, and holds out his foot to the fortunate person on whom his choice falls."

A strange, fascinating, cruel land is Morocco—very difficult for the European to understand.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### TANGIER

It is the last of the Oriental cities. And this last child of the East—with nothing lying beyond but unknown waters of the Atlantic—stands in regretful pose. Her face is turned back eastward. All the cities of her lineage have greeted the sun before she greets it. When the ocean behind her is flushed with the glory of evening, the Moors assemble on the house-tops, and look toward the blackness as though their fiery eyes would pierce the gloom until Mecca itself were spied.

Blue, white, cream-tinted, but chiefly blue, Tangier sits on the left shoulder of an exquisite, north-facing bay. Tangier, however, is ever looking back, ever eastward. That is why, when the waters of the sea mirror the pale beauty of the sky, and Tangier is just a splash of coloured lights and dead shadows—like a Brabazon picture turned into reality—a mournful haze seems to wrap the city. There is busy life in the marts; there is the minaret of the mosque, the cry to prayer; there is the fantastic glamour of the Orient. But it is the last city. It is the boundary; it is the end of all things Oriental. If cities have souls, then I think Tangier must sigh, "I am alone; I am cut off from my kindred. All my hopes are in the East. Though I am the western-

most city in Mauretania, my glance is ever towards the East."

Now, if Moorish Tangier would stretch eastward, even a single mile, it cannot. No way farther east can the Moor erect his narrow passages and blank-walled houses. Tangier is cut off; it is stranded. For a French syndicate has bought up most of the land east of the native city, and the sand dunes which have not been purchased by Frenchmen have been taken over by German amalgamations. A tree-dotted, straight boulevard is growing, and boards announce that adjoining land is to let and facilities will be given for payment by instalments. A tramway is to run along the boulevard. It is expected European Tangier, one of these days, will be a gay little Paris. Moorish Tangier will remain where it is, at the western end, but in the bend of the bay with glance toward Mecca.

The Sultan lives at Fez, but Tangier is the real capital of Morocco. Here stay the Ministers from Foreign Powers, and, with much polite squabbling, they manage things between them. France smiles, and sees the time when most of Morocco will be hers. But with no fortifications on the hills overlooking the Straits of Gibraltar, insists Great Britain.

France would like to build railways, but Germany, so progressive at home, is sure railways would be bad for Morocco—that is, French railways.

However, the French look after the Customs, and the Spaniards train the police. There is Moorish money, but English shillings, French francs, Spanish pesetas, are all good currency.

Morocco has no effective postal service. Each

country of importance has its own post office and its own stamps. At the Cecil Hotel an English boy came at half-past nine to open the red letter-box on one side of the vestibule, and at a quarter to ten a German youth appeared to open the silver-grey letter-box on the other side of the vestibule.

At the cafés in the twisted main street you can order your favourite beverage in half a dozen languages, and the waiter understands.

The Moor dislikes the unbeliever. If he is going to perdition, he prefers to go his own way. He does not believe in modern inventions—railways and telegraphs and telephones. If he likes a rickety mule-track over the mountains, what business is it of the unbeliever to say there should be carriage roads? The Moor does not want your civilisation. After all, it is his country, and if it is misgoverned it is no concern of the foreigner. Besides, when the foreigner talks about enlightenment and progress, and civilisation and Christianity, he means grabbing slices of Morocco. The Moor chuckles sardonically in his beard, and says the Moors taught Spain all the civilisation it has ever had.

The Moors hate France and suspect Great Britain. Germany is a friend, because Germany spokes the wheels of French progress in Morocco. The Moors would rather all Christians went away. The only thing Christians ever made which the Moors can appreciate is the Mauser rifle. But the foreigners prohibit the importation of Mausers into Morocco. Just like the Christian, who has a modern rifle, and in disputes with the Moors thinks it is fair fighting to restrict the Moor to antique flintlocks, muzzle-



loading, which cannot carry shot much farther than across the road! The Moor would like to have a thorough throat-slicing of every Christian in Morocco.

Come up the cobble-paved and funnel-like streets to the crumbling remains of native Tangier.

The Palace! In the dim light of evening you can venture on strange imaginings. Long, dark passages with heavy doors. Moorish tiles, and sometimes Spanish tiles. The outer walls are high and stout, and without windows. All chambers look into inner courts which have arcades, and in the centre are fountains—without water.

The custodian carries a mass of keys. Maybe it was some predecessor of his who accompanied Blue-beard on his rounds. The dimpled woodwork of the roofs is soft with shadow and age. Much gentle carving of stucco makes a frieze like a band of lace. But the splashing of cheap whitewash has obliterated much delicacy of tracery.

The Palace smells musty. The Sultan, in Fez, has no money for its repair. The kind French, however, are seeing to that. In the Audience Chamber they have laid down eye-aching cheap mats; and along the remnants of Moorish art they have tacked the cords of electric wire; and cheap opalesque shades, edged with port red, hang where only the dull brass of Oriental lamps would be appropriate. No divans encased in silken embroideries worked by the ladies of the harem. Gimcrack modern French furniture, with atrocious yellow plush ornamentation. How lacking in taste the French can be when they really try!

A fat Frenchman—a man in authority no doubt—

told the custodian that next day he was bringing a party of French ladies to picnic in the Palace, and visitors must be kept out. Giggling Parisiennes, in high-heeled shoes and voluminous hats and tight-fitting skirts, invading the Palace where only the beauties among Moorish women were once admitted, and now are flown to the limbo of the unknown—perhaps they are houris in the Moslem Paradise, and there sip celestial sherbet whilst reclining on carpets which owe none of their charm to aniline dye.

The Treasury is next door. There are narrow steps hoisting steep to the portico. The arches are rich curves, and the sun never breaks the shade of the inner court. There is no Aladdin to motion you to some mysterious wall face, whisper the word and, when the stone panel slides, conduct you by glimmering, archaic lamp down worn steps to dungeons where diamonds are stocked like coals and bars of gold are piled in corners. Nothing like that. But in a corner is a stack of heavy trunks, not ordinary trunks that a railway porter can swing with one hand, but trunks half as high as a man, half as long again as a man, and with a span of from finger-tip to finger-tip.—American ladies touring the European continent sometimes have trunks approaching the size of the trunks in the Treasury at Tangier.—Yes, and to rob the story of interest, these trunks are quite empty. Not a gold coin is to be found lodged within a crack. Give them a kick, and they boom like a dismantled cupboard. But, in the stirring days of long ago, they were filled with treasure, and were carried to Fez and back from Fez, and it required six tame mules, three in long shafts in front and

three in long shafts behind, to ferry each of these trunks from coast to capital.

Not a coin in the Treasury ! The French appropriate all the money from the Customs by way of indemnity, because the Moors did not want the French to civilise them at Casablanca. The Moors lost many men ; they lost Casablanca ; now the revenue is annexed at the gates, and much of it is spent in providing troops to compel the Moors to accept the advantages of civilisation. Meanwhile, the man who looks after the Treasury is very pleased to accept a tip of half a franc.

There is a hubbub. I stand on the steps, and from the Court of Justice on the right a scant-clad and turbanless Moor, ejaculating horrible things, is in the custody of two khaki-clad, Spanish-drilled Moorish policemen, and they are hastening him to prison.

The Court is like the vestibule to a big building—only it is all vestibule and there is no big building. Two steps and an oblong apartment. Opposite the door, and squatting, sit two Moors, one young, the other elderly. Outside, crouching, resting on their heels, are Moorish lawyers. On the other side, standing, and with shoulder-blades against the walls, are the litigants. I notice the lawyers are jokefully happy, whilst the litigants have a demure, heart-sick, wish-I-were-out-of-this-mess look about them—just as in civilised countries.

The judges listen sedately. They commit to prison but without definite sentence. The evil-doer goes to prison, and when he escapes Allah alone can tell. But in a little whitewashed room to the left

of the judges sits an official. He sits on a rush mat, and he inclines his left ear to a suppliant. He is solemn, severe, austere, and the suppliant is pleading. The suppliant pulls up his skirt, produces a wallet, extracts silver coins. The official examines front, back, and rim of each coin to be assured of its genuineness. The suppliant holds the final coin; he smirks; surely the official will not squeeze every drop. The official smiles, but he squeezes. The money is paid. The official calls for Hamid or Hassan or Ali or Mohammed and a prisoner is released. The prisoner kisses noisily the friend who has bought his discharge. The power of wealth was as evident here in Tangier as ever it was in New York.

It cost me a franc and a half to peep into the prison. Great is the power of baksheesh!

A sort of a landing, with a grizzle-whiskered old fellow resting on his elbow, who nodded acquiescence, in charge. Many shoulders had removed much of the last coat of whitewash. A big, black door, heavily beamed and with ponderous iron bars, had a hole breast-high, a hole not quite as large as the porthole on a passenger ship. There was a jostle of faces and a surge of hands, just as though a Rugby scrimmage were on the other side and the hole was the ball. The custodian jammed his stick in the hole; he waggled it. That made room. I could peer inside.

I looked down an avenue of faces of all shades of duskiness, faces that were brutal, generally pathetic, but a whining expression on all of them. The men held out their palms, not far, for the stick was not distant, and they all bleated sadly that the visitor

would give them money. The authorities had no money and fed them with hunks of bread. If their friends did not bring them food, or if people were not generous in the name of Allah, or if they were unable to sell the rush baskets they wove in the prison, they were like to starve. The prison was just a courtyard. Some of the men had been there for years. Confinement had made them very weak. They lay huddled in corners, deadening the pain of gnawing hunger by drowsing the hours away.

A second chamber, reserved for Jews—not stunted, bulbous-figured Jews, but long and lean and wan and hollow-eyed, with ringlets dropping by the ear from under small, round caps. Wiry black whiskers tufted their chins. They were saddening and sickening. In their eyes was the melancholy which came from generations of ill-usage; they looked crushed, pitiful, sneaking; and yet it seemed that through the shutter of gloom was the red fire of enmity.

There was no hustling behind the porthole. There was no eager cadging of alms. As I put my face to the hole, they stood about in a group and stretched out their hands, and beseeching was in their look. They made no requests. An ill-lit dungeon, in which they were kept; most of the light strained through the porthole. A clang of iron, and the porthole was closed.

Here was uproar! “Buy basket, sir; give money, sir!” A third chamber, and the stick drove back the prisoners.

Strong men, black-haired, sturdy ruffians—not pilferers who sidle along the dark passages of Tangier

at night, but brigands, highwaymen, horse thieves, the murderers of lonely travellers, assassins, the desperadoes who live in the hills at the back of Tangier. No hang-dog sneakiness about them. Coarse-grained, fleshy-lipped, muscular, they clamoured that money be given them, or, failing that, you buy a crude basket. The stick they heed not much. They snarl at one another. They push, threaten to fight.

A man tumbles. He rises awkwardly, and I notice he is manacled. Heavy clamps are round his ankles, as broad as a hand, and there are but two links of a chain between the anklets. They wear these for years; the only movement is a hobble, and when they are weak they crawl. When a man is released he often does not know how to walk.

One half-minute's walk and I am in sunshine, and the Bay of Tangier is deep blue flecked with silver; French and Spanish warships lie side by side, and yonder is the Rock of Gibraltar, with the British flag flying from many a masthead in the harbour.

It is Thursday, and the great market is held on a muddy slope beyond the upper gates. Peasants have journeyed a day's march to sell their wares, and will spend to-morrow returning to their villages. The town Moor has a slithering gait, but the country men and country women are stalwart and brawny. Many of the country women do not veil. They crouch on their haunches, and beneath enormous, canopy-like straw hats. They are packed tight, shoulder to shoulder, and on the ground between their outspread feet are fowls and groups of eggs and bunches of wild dates. There is a jostling heave of pedestrians, and the women scream and pinch passing legs to save

their property. At one corner, not so crowded, are women with platters of wheat-cakes before them: fanged old creatures, water-eyed and parchment-skinned, and soft-featured young women with olive complexions and eyes from which radiance has not yet been burnt—all divorced women, all at any rate put away by their husbands, because it was the will of the husbands, for sundry reasons. By custom, these women have reserved to them the business of selling bread.

From one side comes the aroma of cooking. Dozens of little cook-shop sheds, and all the preparation of food goes on before the customers' eyes. There are soups, and the sizzle of frying meats, and the splutter of doughnuts in dishes of hot, bubbling syrup. At the back of one eating-house is a broad board. Beneath it a Jew is licking his fingers after eating a honey-dipped cake, and on it a Moor is noisily munching pieces of grilled sheep. The appurtenances are unattractive, but the food looks good and smells wholesome.

Resting on a box is a white-clad Moor guarding a green-edged flag—an emissary from a holy man in the hills, who expects the Faithful to be generous, for in his prayers he will invite Allah to recompense them.

Here are a score of warriors from the Riff Mountains, their dark brown *djellabahs* or cloaks studded down the sleeves and round the hem with rosettes of bright-coloured wool. Ancient flintlocks are slung across their shoulders—useless weapons, surely, or the authorities would not permit them in the town.

Rich merchants from Fez carry ornate, silver-

sheathed daggers. Fair men from the north, black men from the south, press and shove and bargain and squabble. Barbers in their tents are busy shaving heads, leaving one long tuft which will be useful when Gabriel hauls its owner to heaven. There is a rattle of brass saucers, and a man with a heavy goat-skin on his hip is selling water. Donkeys are beaten to a gallop; mules are spurred to a trot. I give my assurance that I do not want to purchase a donkey, and I do not know what I would do with a mule.

“La la! ha-ha!” and a black man, with a face so black and so shiny he must have been freshly painted black that morning, skips forward. “Ho, ho!” He smiles and opens wide his pursy, juicy lips. He grimaces. He has a cap of shells. His tattered coat is a mosaic of many tints. He has a strange musical instrument which he twangs and strums. “Ha, ha! Ho, ho!” He dances and he sings far down his throat. “Yuss, Noo-Yak, Cheekako, Philadelphée, Wahshing-tong; Yuss.” He skips and chortles. He is from Timbuctoo, a storyteller, an entertainer, picturesque in his motley. Once a United States visitor had a fancy for this man from Timbuctoo. He took him back with him to America. The man from Timbuctoo stood the life for a time; but it was so noisy and so barbaric that he returned to Morocco where he could sleep, and where, in the safety of the Tangier market-place, he runs no risk of being slain by an electric street car. Morocco is the happiest country after all—for him.

Here, in Tangier, West meets East. Who are the



people at the hotel ? A duke and his wife, the sister of an exiled queen. A quiet-mannered man with a touch of the north of England on his tongue, a man who lives down the coast, at Casablanca, and is engaged in the Manchester business. A soft-mannered lady who sits alone ; an American wandering the world. A decrepit Frenchman and his florid wife. A fat German and his fat young frau. Two rosy-faced but awkward-mannered young Englishmen, who spend much time on horseback scampering along the hard sands of the sea front. A business man from Gibraltar, half Spanish in race, but wholly British in sentiment. An artist—indifferent. An author—oh, yes, he is indifferent too. Soft-footed Moors are the servants.

What a mixture of races here, in Tangier ! After dinner a cup of coffee at a café where German seems chiefly to be spoken. Then to a Moorish saloon, and the sipping of over-sugared mint tea whilst fat women wriggle their stomachs and call it dancing. Then to a Spanish café. Spry music and the rattle of castanets, and pretty Spanish girls dance and glide and sing, and come down and drink beer with generous members of the audience, and laugh and clap their hands—just as though life were one long, rapturous, merry evening.

And everywhere touts and alleged guides, who know a dozen words of as many languages. You are badgered to buy picture post cards ; vile imitation Moorish articles are hawked—scarves, shawls, fake-jewellery, amber beads, daggers, pistols, powder-horns, ornate but useless Moorish arms. Tangier is a peep-show for the entertainment of the tourist.

A huge European steamship has just dropped anchor in the bay. It is crowded with Europeans, and will remain for four hours. The Europeans are to make their first acquaintance with the East. Dozens of row-boats, crowded with passengers, are jerked to the shelter of the harbour. The visitors are set upon by the touts. They are all excitement and flurry, and they mount red-saddled mules and go, laughing, and in clattering throng, through the foul but curious streets with their polyglot denizens—all very strange to people who have never seen the East before. Smirking dealers in antiques invite visitors into their parlours, "not to buy, sare, just to look," and the touts and guides, who are to get commissions, press the ladies and gentlemen.

Yet it is agreeable to dawdle in these darkened rooms packed with Moorish wares. Here is a stack of ivory-hafted, silver-inlaid rifles, long and slender and delicate. As you play with the light piece you wonder about its story: on what young Moor's shoulder has it rested; has it ever played a part in life's tragedy? But the Jew dealer, seeing the glint in your eye, is asking two hundred and fifty francs for it, and you cannot make up your mind whether it is worth a hundred and twenty francs to you—and how are you to get it home if you buy it? High-pommelled old saddles, once gay with gold lace and red and green in worked leathers, but now dull and ragged. Wonderful old Arab lanterns, and lamps with cups for the eight lights at times of religious festival. And "Fatma hands" in embossed brass—what a dumpy, squat-fingered hand the favourite daughter of Mohammed must have had,

if these replicas are anything of a likeness: but as useful as a horse-shoe to fasten upon a door and keep ill-luck away. And the neat, soft leather bags, which every Moor carries suspended from his shoulder, tasselled, with pocket within pocket and under pocket, you can buy these by the score. Crude but attractive Moorish brooches; chased and filigreed silver cups with inscriptions from the Koran—what pretty finger-bowls they would make on a dining-room table in Paris or Washington or London—and they are the bowls which Moorish maidens use to lave themselves with water when at the bath.

Rugs! “Ah, close the door. Hamid, go and fetch coffee for the distinguished visitor.” The Jewish dealer knows at once that the distinguished visitor is a judge of valuable rugs—though maybe you did not know it yourself. Of course, he has a lot of ordinary rugs—is monsieur interested in tapestries?—which are good enough for the ordinary tourist. But the moment monsieur entered the shop the dealer knew monsieur wanted something good, *très* antique, real old, very valuable, not like the rubbish sold by the other dealers.

“I will show you, sare. You not buy if you not want. No harm in showing. Here, vere beautiful—this from Tetuan, sare. You been Tetuan, sare? Oh, beautiful place, Tetuan! Vere cheap, two hundred francs—oh, yes, sare, vere cheap; no dear; no, no dear. Look, sare; feel, vere antique; you ask three hundred francs at other shop. I also ask three hundred francs, but I like you. You man who knows. No good try fool you. Maybe you like this? This Fez work; all hand work, sare.

Vere beautiful. No ? Here, sare, this is beauty ; hang round walls, all silk—seven arches, you see Arabic design ; this from house of great chief in the Riff Mountains. Me ask two hundred francs, but let you have it for a hundred and fifty francs, but ” —in a whisper—“ you not tell any other dealers you buy so cheap. Vere angry other dealers wid me if know I sell so cheap. Oh, sare ! Fifte-e-e francs ! You only offer fifty francs ? See, all silk, seven arches, Arabic design, all hand-sewn ! You give me a hundred and twenty francs ? No ? You give me a hundred francs ? No ? You give me eighty francs ? Oh, sare, look ; hand-sewn, all silk, seven arches Arabic design—vere beautiful decoration on wall at home. See, sare, listen ; you give me seventy-five francs ; you take my name—here on my card—you sell in London ; if you do not get two hundred francs me give you money back. Fifte-e-e ! Oh, sare ! I give more mineself. Give me sixty. You vere intelligent man, I know. See ! You first man buy to-day. Me believe in luck. Tell you, give me fifty francs for tapestry and ’nother ten francs present to my wife. No ? Sare, you not know what bargain you are getting. You pay much more other dealer ; I vere cheap. Fifte-e-e, sare ! All right, I let you have it for fifty. Hamid, just wrap up. Look here, sare ; lovely piece. This Marakeesh work ; vere good work, Marakeesh. You find another piece like this in Tangier, me give you this for noddin’. Other man ask a hundred and fifty francs ; not one franc less ; no, sare. But you good judge ; you know good carpet ; no good try to fool you. Me let you have this, special favour ”—and so on all over again.

It is a delicious experience, haggling in a Tangier curio shop, but you want to have plenty of time.

Yet Tangier is a sad town, shine the sun never so brightly. It is the most western of Orient towns. But it has turned its back on the West. It looks to the East, the fragrant, mysterious East, where Mecc lies. It seems to feel its days as an Oriental city are numbered.

The red flag of the Sultan of Morocco will not<sup>ca</sup> always fly over the Kasbah. Once the English flag<sup>JA</sup> flew over it, when Tangier came as the dowry of a Portuguese princess, Catherine of Braganza, on her marriage to an English king, Charles II. There was brave fighting in those days of old. But it was expensive, and the time came when England had no use for Tangier, and came away. But now Britain and France and Germany would like to have Tangier—it is at the gate of the Mediterranean.

I think it will be the French flag which will fly over the Kasbah. Britain will not interfere with the policy of France in North Western Africa, so long as France makes no trouble about Britain's policy in North Eastern Africa. But Germany looks on, and scowls and growls. She cannot have Morocco, but, if she can prevent it, neither shall France. And this is just the political situation in a nutshell.

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